

Library of the Theological Seminary,

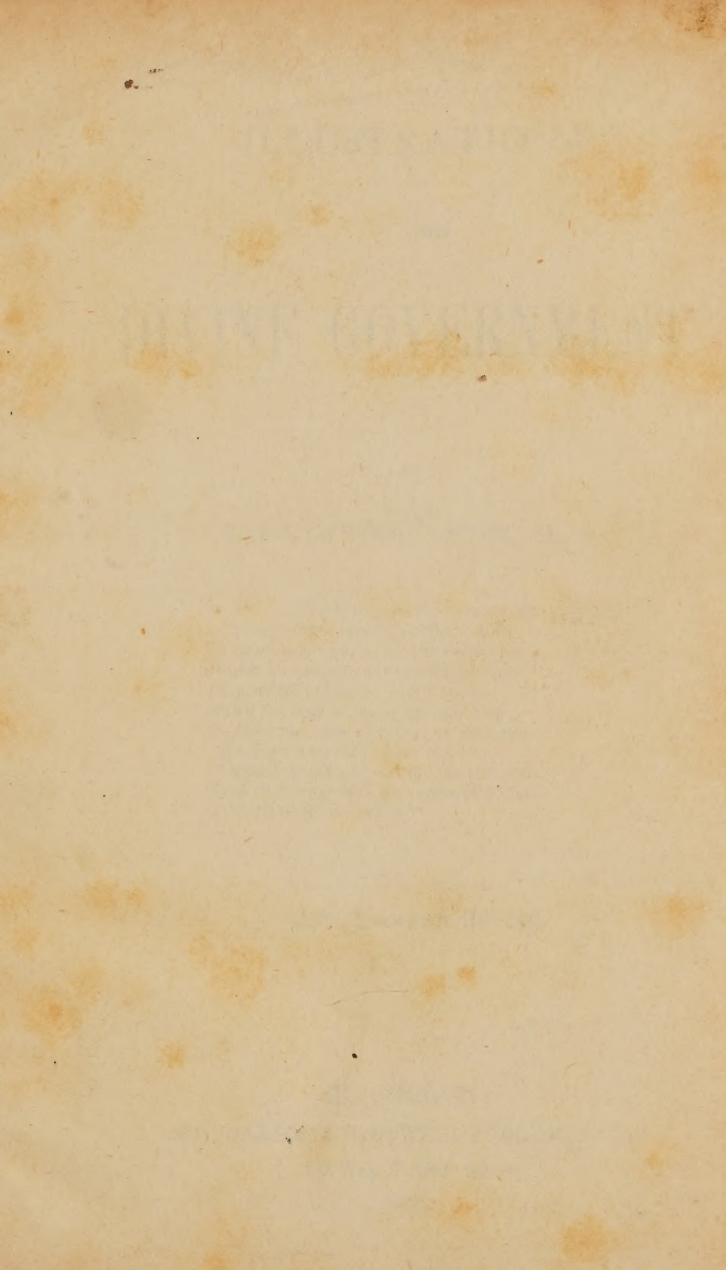
PRINCETON, N. J.

BT 96 .S65 1871

Smith, Southwood, 1788-1861.

Illustrations of the divine
government

Shelf....



James Brady

ILLUSTRATIONS

OF THE

DIVINE GOVERNMENT.

BY

T. SOUTHWOOD SMITH, M. D.

* * "Beholding, in the sacred light
Of his essential reason, all the shapes
Of swift contingency, all successive ties
Of action, propagated through the sum
Of possible existence—he at once,
Down the long series of eventful time,
So fixed the dates of being—so disposed,
To every living soul of every kind,
The field of motion, and the hour of rest,
That all conspired to his supreme design—
TO UNIVERSAL GOOD!"

Fifth American Edition.

CINCINNATI:

WILLIAMSON & CANTWELL PUBLISHING CO.

115 West Fourth Street,

1871.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

LONDON EDITION.

THE more I have contemplated the view of the divine character and government which is exhibited in the following pages, and the more the engagements of life have brought me acquainted with the wants of the human mind in this state of discipline, and therefore of vicissitude and suffering, the more deep has become my conviction, that, were the opinions which it is the object of this work to establish generally believed and considered, they would promote, in an incalculable measure, the virtue and happiness of mankind. This conviction coincides with that of the wisest and best men whom I have the pleasure of knowing. My sense of the importance of rendering this view of the moral government of the Deity as complete as possible is therefore stronger than ever, and under this impression I have entered, in this edition, into a more close and connected investigation of the origin, the nature, and the tendency of evil. I have considered, separately and in detail, the several classes of evil, namely, natural and moral evil, and the evils which have hitherto been found inseparable from the social state, namely, poverty, dependence, and servitude. I have endeavored to show why these evils exist in the creation of a Being of almighty power, of in-

finite wisdom, and of perfect goodness. I have endeavored to lead the mind to the calm and serious consideration of principles which seem adequate to divest it of doubt, where doubt must be unhappiness, and to conduct it to a conclusion which, if once embraced from conviction, must secure it from misery.

I look back to the quiet and contemplative hours which were devoted to these inquiries with the feeling, not unmixed with melancholy, with which we reflect on our departed pleasures. And yet there is a closer connection than there might at first sight seem, between these subjects and those which now much more exclusively occupy my attention. The real end of both is the same ; for the object of each is alike to extend the knowledge, to mitigate the suffering, and to increase the happiness, of mankind ; and without doubt this is the great business of life. Whoever succeeds in it most is the wisest, the ablest, and the happiest of his race ; and even he whose measure of success is not great cannot be without satisfaction, so long as he is conscious of the wish and the effort to accomplish more.

*London, Trinity Square,
March, 1822.*

P R E F A C E.

IF it be reasonable to refer the formation of the earth and of all the objects and beings on its surface to an intelligent agent, and if we cannot doubt that we are entirely dependent upon our Creator for all which we possess and hope, it must be of unspeakable importance, to ascertain what his character really is; and if there be indeed reason to believe that, in fashioning our frame, and appointing that it should undergo at a certain period a total disorganization, he do not by that change design to destroy us, but to qualify us for a higher state and for nobler pursuits, no inquiry can be so interesting as that which relates to our destiny in the ages which are before us.

Were it possible to arm ourselves against the calamities of life, as Perseus is fabled to have been armed by the gods for his far-famed expedition, he who should commence the career of existence without his helmet, falchion, and ægis, would be universally regarded as destitute of reason; but that individual is infinitely better prepared to encounter the evil with which he has to combat, who believes in the doctrine of a Providence, and knows the ground of his belief—that is, who views all events with the eye, and meets them with the feeling, of a Christian philosopher. With this belief, no combination of circumstances can make him, for any considerable period, unhappy; without it, nothing can afford him a pleasure of which Wisdom ought not to fear to participate, and with which Philosophy ought not to blush to be content.

It was under the influence of this conviction, that the author of the following work commenced it with a trembling mind, afraid to undertake a task of so much magnitude and interest. But appearing to himself to have formed a clear, consistent, and cheering view of the nature and object of the dispensations of the great Parent of mankind, and having, in the retirement of private life, been a witness, on occasions which to him were deeply impressive, of the tendency of that view to heighten the pleasure of the hour of enjoyment, and to sustain the mind in the day of sorrow, he thought that, by directing the attention of his fellow-Christians to a comprehensive and connected investigation of the subject, he might possibly contribute something to the removal of their doubts and the confirmation of their faith. If, in any degree, he has succeeded in this object, his success will ever appear to him invaluable.

In one part of the work, an expression or two occur, which some persons may consider strong, and perhaps uncandid, relative to doctrines which appear to him unjust, malevolent, and immoral ; but he trusts the spirit which this volume breathes will secure him from the suspicion of attributing any thing of injustice, malevolence, or immorality, to the persons who maintain the opinions which he condemns. The intelligent inquirer will have made but little progress in his religious investigation, before he learns the necessity of distinguishing between rectitude of character, and excellence of system—between the malignant tendency of a creed, and the benignity of the heart which embraces it. Neither justice nor charity can exist, unless this distinction be constantly kept up ; and it is because it is so seldom made, that justice and charity are, among theologians, scarcely any thing but a name.

The author would particularly solicit the attention of

his readers, and especially of those who may be believers in the doctrine of Limited Punishment, terminated by Destruction, to that part of the work in which this subject is discussed. He has there endeavored to meet, fairly and fully, all the arguments, as far as he has been able to learn them, which are urged in support of the hypothesis. Feeling, as he does, a thorough persuasion that each is satisfactorily answered, and that on the other hand, difficulties are stated against the doctrine, which are insuperable, he cannot but think that the reasoning which appears to his own mind so forcible may possibly make some impression on that of the candid and patient inquirer. He is well aware, however, of the different estimate which different persons form of the force of the same arguments, and, instead of cherishing a positive feeling that he is right, he is much more disposed to bear in mind the possibility of his being under those common influences by which we impose upon ourselves respecting the conclusiveness of our own reasonings, and to attend with thankfulness to any one who may do him the favor to correct any mistake into which he may have fallen.

To the friends who encouraged him to proceed with this work, by honoring him with their names as subscribers to it, as soon as they heard it was projected, the author returns his thanks ; and the ardent testimony of approbation which he has received from some of them, since its publication, has excited the hope that he has not written wholly in vain, and that these pages may perhaps be the means of speaking peace to the perturbed mind, and of solacing the sorrows of the mourner, when the hand which penned them is motionless, and the heart which dictated them shall have ceased to beat with human emotion.

CONTENTS.

Part First.

OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT.

PAGE.

SECT. 1. Of the proof of the Government of God,	13
SECT. 2. Of the Manner in which the Divine Government is administered,	32
SECT. 3. Of the Design of the Divine Government, and of the Proof, that Evil is the Means of producing Ultimate Good,	49

Part Second.

INTRODUCTION.—Of the kind of evidence which is necessary to establish the Doctrine of the Ultimate Purity and Happiness of all Mankind,	67
Of the evidence in favor of the Final Restoration of all Mankind to Purity and Happiness, distinct from that afforded by the express Declarations of Scripture,	71

CHAPTER I.

Of the Argument in favor of the Doctrine of Universal Restoration, derived from the Perfections of God.	
SECT. 1. Of the Goodness of God,	72
SECT. 2. Of the Evil of Defect, and of Natural and Moral Evil,	91

	PAGE.
SECT. 3. Of the Evils of the Social State, and especially of the Evils which are alleged to result from the principle of Population,	116
SECT. 4. Of the Design of God in the Creation, and of what is really meant when it is said that He created the World for His own Glory,	162
SECT. 5. Of the Universality of the Divine Benevolence,	170
SECT. 6. Of the Impossibility of frustrating the Design of the Deity,	178
SECT. 7. Of the Harmony of the Divine Perfections,	181

CHAPTER II.

Of the Argument in favor of the Doctrine of Universal Restoration, from the Nature of Man,	188
--	-----

CHAPTER III.

Of the Argument in favor of the Doctrine of Universal Restoration, from the Nature and Object of Punishment, and of the Proof, that the future Punishment of the Wicked will be Corrective, in answer to the Objections and Reasonings of Dr. Jonathan Edwards,	203
---	-----

Part Third.

Of the Objections which are urged against the Doctrine of Universal Restoration, whether derived from those passages of Scripture, or from those Reasonings, which are supposed to prove the Doctrine of Endless Misery, or from those which are conceived to favor the Doctrine of Limited Punishment, terminated by Destruction,	226
--	-----

CHAPTER I.

	PAGE.
Of Endless Misery,	228
SECT. 1. Of the term, Everlasting,	233
SECT. 2. Of the Application of the same Word to the Happiness of the Righteous, and the Punishment of the Wicked,	250
SECT. 3. Of the Argument in favor of Endless Misery, derived from the phrase, Unquenchable Fire,	255
SECT. 4. Of the Argument in favor of Endless Misery, founded on the case of Judas,	262
SECT. 5. Of the Argument in favor of Endless Misery, derived from the Language which is used concerning the Sin against the Holy Ghost,	265
SECT. 6. Of the Argument in favor of Endless Misery, deduced from the Parable of the Great Gulph,	272
SECT. 7. Of the Opinion that there will be no successive Du- ration in a Future State	275

CHAPTER II.

Of the Arguments conceived to favor the Doctrine of Endless Misery, which are not founded on the express Dec- larations of Scripture.	
SECT. 1. Of the Infinite Evil of Sin,	278
SECT. 2. Of the Argument in favor of Endless Misery, founded on the Divine Justice, with an examination of the Reasonings of Dr. Edwards on this Subject,	281
SECT. 3. Of the Argument in favor of Endless Misery, founded on the Divine Sovereignty,	304

CHAPTER III.

Of the Doctrine of Limited Punishment, terminated by Des- truction,	311
--	-----

Part Fourth.

PAGE.

Of the Scriptural Evidence in favor of the Doctrine of the Final Restoration of all Mankind to Purity and Happiness,	325
--	-----

CHAPTER I.

Of the Passages of Scripture which imply that all Mankind will be ultimately restored to Purity and Happiness,	329
--	-----

CHAPTER II.

Of the Passages of Scripture which appear expressly to affirm that all Mankind will be ultimately restored to Purity and Happiness,	344
APPENDIX,	367

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT.

Part First.

SECTION I.

OF THE PROOF OF THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

IN endeavoring to account for the existence of the world, we find it impossible to resist the conclusion, that it is the production of a Being of almighty power and of perfect goodness. It is evident that it did not create itself, for creation necessarily supposes a preëxisting intelligence. It is evident that the creatures on its surface did not give being to themselves, for they do not comprehend the mode of their own existence. They must therefore derive their origin from some Being who understood their nature, and who endowed them with the faculties they possess.

The simplest ideas we seem capable of forming of this Being are, that he is intelligent, and that he is uncaused. Intelligent he must be, for there are in his works proofs of exquisite and amazing skill; and, if there be any thing of which we may be certain, it is, that, wherever there is contrivance, there must have been a contriver, and that an adaption of means to an

end cannot possibly exist without the operation of a Being who perceived and designed the end, and fitted the means to accomplish it.

That the Great First Cause of all things must be himself uncaused, is also a truth which we are obliged to admit; for, if we imagine that the immediate Creator of the world derives his existence and power from some superior being, we must suppose, either that this superior being is uncaused—in which case it is he who will answer to our conception of the Deity—or that he is dependent upon a third, and that this third is dependent on a fourth, and so on in an infinite series. But this infinite succession of dependent beings requires a first and independent cause, as much as any one in the series; and, however far we may choose to carry our thoughts backward, we must at length come to the conclusion, that there is some one independent, underived Being, the peculiarity of whose nature we endeavor to express by saying that he is self-existent. It is this Being that we term God, and that we suppose to be the Creator of the world.

If, in this visible creation, there be proofs of such contrivance as cannot but convince the mind that it is the production of infinite intelligence, it likewise contains indications of such power as we must acknowledge to be altogether without limits. He who could create such a world as this must be able to do whatever it is possible for wisdom and power to accomplish. We have therefore no difficulty in conceiving that the Author of this part of the creation is the Author of the universe, however unlimited it be, or however amazing the degree of wisdom and power necessary to the production of it; for, though other worlds may be

much greater in magnitude than this, and may contain much higher and nobler displays of wisdom, (which may possibly be the case, though we can scarcely conceive how even infinite wisdom can go beyond some contrivances with which we are acquainted,) yet there are in this globe sufficient appearances of it, to account for any which may exist in other parts of the creation, however glorious they may be.

The discoveries of modern science have exhibited in the most striking light these indications of wisdom in the economy of nature; and education, which is now generally diffused, has rendered them so familiar, that few are entirely ignorant of them. Amidst all these wonders, in nothing, perhaps, is the matchless skill of the Creator more admirably displayed, than in the simplicity of the means which he has adopted to accomplish his vast and mighty purposes. By one single principle he preserves the planets in their orbits, regulates and adjusts their various movements, determines the descent of bodies to the earth, and retains them at its surface. By a similar, if not the same principle, he causes the particles of matter, of which bodies are composed, to cohere, and, by the same power, exerted between particles of different kinds, all existing and all possible combinations of matter are formed. The same sun, which gives stability to the system of which it is the centre, furnishes it with light and heat. The same air, which sustains animal life in respiration, alike promotes the process of vegetation, supports combustion, equalizes temperature over the globe, dissolves, elevates, and diffuses water, deposits it again in the form of dew or rain, and thus enriches and beautifies the earth. Though by respiration, by

the process of vegetation, and by many other chemical changes which take place without ceasing at the earth's surface, there is a constant consumption of one of the constituent principles of this air, and as constant a production of another, yet it is never deteriorated; because, by an arrangement which, if subsequent investigation shall establish its correctness, must be ranked amongst one of the most admirable adjustments in the whole economy of nature, that part of the air which is no longer fitted for the function of respiration, but which would prove deleterious to animals, is the very part which ministers to the nourishment of plants; and that part which plants exhale, animals inhale. Neither is the air in the least degree exhausted by the constant expenditure of it, either by the two tribes of animated beings, or by innumerable processes which are constantly taking place, and to which it affords the materials; but, by the disengagement of its simple gases in other processes, and their reunion, the necessary supply, the just equilibrium, is kept up.

The same comprehensive wisdom is seen in the means which have been provided to secure the constant fertility of the earth, by the appointment of the law, that the destruction of one vegetable shall afford nourishment to another, and in like manner to keep up the supply of food for animals, by the appointment of the law, that they shall furnish subsistence to each other.

Were it necessary, in this argument, to descend to the consideration of the structure of individual bodies belonging to the animal or vegetable kingdom, it would be easy to point out, in both, instances of such

consummate skill, as no mind could possibly contemplate without the highest admiration.

The proof of the goodness of the Creator is as complete as that of his wisdom, and even of his existence itself. We infer his existence from the appearance of design in his works, and his wisdom from the exquisiteness of that design; but every proof of design is equally a proof of benevolence, because the object of every contrivance is the production of good. We are not, therefore, more certain of the existence and wisdom of the Deity, than of his goodness; for the very facts on which we ground our belief of the former equally establish the latter.

If, then, the world be indeed the production of a Being who is infinite in wisdom, power, and goodness, the proof of his constant and perfect superintendence of it seems to be irresistible. For, since he is perfect in wisdom, he could not have created it without some design; and that design, whatever it be, he must be careful to accomplish. Whether we suppose he created it with a view to display to his intelligent creatures his wisdom and power, or with a design to impart enjoyment to an inconceivable number and variety of beings, we must believe, in the one case, that he will at all times provide against the interruption of that order which alone can illustrate his perfections, and the destruction of those faculties which are necessary to perceive them, and in the other, that he will suffer no event to happen, which can prevent or impair the happiness he determines to bestow. In every successive period, therefore, he must have exactly the same reason to superintend the events which take place in his creation, as he had at first to perform the glorious work.

Nothing is more evident, than that the inanimate and insensible part of the creation is fitted up for the accommodation, and designed to promote the happiness, of the sentient. The inanimate world is continually in motion, and every movement must influence, in a greater or less degree, the enjoyment of the animal creation. He, therefore, who constructed the wonderful fabric of the world, and so admirably adapted it to the enjoyment of the innumerable beings it contains, continually watches over the movements which take place within it, that they may not break in upon the order, nor impair the happiness he has established.

But the animal creation itself is likewise continually in motion. An animal possesses the power of originating motion, by which sometimes its existence, and always its happiness, in a greater or less degree, are affected. The care of the Deity must therefore extend to the movements of the animal, no less than to those of the material world.

Such, then, being the constitution of things—it being evident that the material* is made for the animal creation—that the material world is continually changing, thereby producing a change in the animal—that the animal world itself is endowed with the property of changing its situation, and every change of *state* being necessarily attended with a change of *sensation*—the doctrine which an enlightened philosophy teaches, is, that the Deity, with a view of making that sensation just what he has seen fit to appoint, continually superintends the changes which induce it.

* By *material* creation is here always meant that part of the world which is supposed to be without sensation, whether organized or unorganized.

If every particle of matter in the globe be more or less in motion, and if we can fix our eye on no spot where there is not organized and conscious existence, the view which is here given of divine providence is large enough to take in the superintendence of the myriads of changes which, according to this supposition, must be taking place in every instant of time. If every star which shines in the firmament of heaven be a world crowded with inhabitants—if every fixed star be a sun, which illumines a system of worlds, as our sun illumines our system, and if all these worlds and systems be filled with organized and happy creatures, (which is at once the most sublime and the most probable view it is possible to take of the creation,) this account of the divine administration is sufficient to comprehend the superintendence of all the events which must be taking place, in every instant of time, throughout this universe of being, to the extent of which we can set no limits, and in the contemplation of which all our faculties are lost.

Whoever believes that the system of the universe did not start into being without a designing cause, acknowledges that its Author is everywhere present. Omnipresence is an attribute which seems essential to the very notion of a God. It is true, we cannot understand how, at one and the same instant, he is present in every part of the universe; but the difficulty in conceiving of the mode of the fact neither does nor ought to bring any doubt upon our belief of the fact itself, because our comprehension of every subject whatever is equally obscure and imperfect. We understand nothing of the mode of the existence of any being. We know that we ourselves exist, but we have no con-

ception of the manner in which the wonderful phenomena of life are produced and continued. Of the existence of the Deity, it is impossible to doubt. We see his works—we feel his power; but in what manner he exists we do not know, because we have no data upon which to form even a conjecture respecting the mode of his existence. The reason that we do not know how he is everywhere present, is because we do not know how he is present anywhere; that is, because we do not at all comprehend the mode of his existence.

We see that man is bound to a little spot of earth, and that his presence at one time is restricted to that spot. This being the only kind of existence with which our senses have made us acquainted, it is natural that we should find it difficult to conceive how a Being can at the same moment be here, and in the most distant part of the globe, and in the most distant planet. But, whatever be the mode of the existence of the Deity, we must necessarily conceive of it as different from our own. For at all events he has been present in this globe—in the planets which form our system, in the sun which is its centre, in every fixed star—in a word, wherever we behold a planet or a star. Whatever these bodies are, they are something; some of them are of immense magnitude, and are placed at such distances from each other, as to be beyond our power of calculation; and no one will contend that they placed themselves where they are. Now he who could place them there—he, the constitution of whose nature admits of his ever having been present at those inconceivable distances, must possess a nature so essentially different from ours, that we ought to have no difficulty in supposing that it may allow of his being

present at them at one and the same time, as easily as at successive periods. As our mode of existence confines our presence to one spot at one time, his may be such as necessarily makes him present in every part of the universe.

Many writers on this subject appear needlessly to have magnified the difficulty which attends our conception of it. They seem in general to think that the Deity bears *no* relation whatever to space—that, in fact, he is actually present *no where*, and that of course it is only in a figurative sense that he is omnipresent. But surely it is more just to conceive of him as *really* pervading all space—as *actually* present in every part of the universe. This idea is at least distinct, and enables us to conceive, in a satisfactory manner, of his universal operation, while the view commonly entertained is extremely confused; for, do what we will, we can form no idea of a Being who bears no relation to space; and, if we could, we should still be pressed with the difficulty of conceiving how a Being can operate where he is not; but if we admit the hypothesis now proposed, we can readily believe that the Deity operates every where; for, according to it, he *is* every where.

In whatever manner, however, we may conceive of the omnipresence of the Deity, we must all admit the fact itself, that by the necessity of his nature he is every where, and that by the same necessity he knows every thing. And no other admission is requisite, to establish, in the most satisfactory manner, his universal and perfect government. His benevolent eye is upon me—his almighty arm is beneath me; with the situation in which I am placed, he is infinitely better acquainted in all its parts, than I am with any single circumstance in

it. He knows that a certain event is about to befall me ; he understands its nature ; he foresees its consequences ; he is perfectly wise ; he is infinitely good. Would he then permit it to happen, did he not foresee it would answer some wise and benevolent purpose ? Can we conceive that he is every where present without acting ? that he knows every thing, without availing himself of the power he possesses, to prevent what is wrong, and to accomplish what is right ? that, though he is perfectly acquainted with every evil which is about to arise, and perfectly able to prevent it, he will not stretch out his hand to do so ? that the original source of all activity is the only inactive Being in the universe, and the source of all energy the only Being who does not exert his power ?

If this opinion be absurd in itself, and unsupported by the shadow of reason, there is but one other conclusion which can be adopted, namely, that every event, which happens to every creature, takes place according to the appointment of the Deity. Nothing can be more frivolous than the objection, that the watchfulness which this supposes over the most trifling concerns of the most insignificant creature is unworthy of the Sovereign of the Universe. Whatever it was not beneath him to create, it cannot be beneath him to provide for and to protect ; and whatever is of any importance, either to the present or the future comfort of any being, is worthy of care in the degree in which it may be the means of enjoyment or the cause of suffering. Its *minuteness* cannot render it unworthy of notice, if it be of any consequence ; and what would detract from the dignity and greatness of the governor of the universe would be, not his taking care of these minute concerns, but his neglecting them.

A great part of animal enjoyment depends upon what we are accustomed to consider as little things. A great number of little things, particularly if they often recur, become of greater importance than any single event, however vast or momentous; they produce, taken together, a large sum of enjoyment, and there seems no possible way of taking care of this collective sum, but by taking care of particular events. And, indeed, the superintendence of minute events implies as much dignity as the superintendence of great events; and our admiration is never more excited, than when we contemplate an intelligence, which, while it directs the most grand and mighty movements, overlooks not the most insignificant concern capable of affecting the ultimate result. That superintendence which extends its care to the least obvious circumstances, no less than to the most striking, is certainly more perfect than that which regards only such events as no intelligent being could possibly overlook.

The apprehension, that this constant superintendence of events, from the minutest circumstance which is capable of exciting sensation, up to those mighty movements which affect the condition of worlds, must be attended with perplexity to the Deity, originates in conceptions equally unenlightened and imperfect. He is at all times present every where, and every where is capable of exerting his power. The superintendence of *all* the events in the universe, therefore, can be attended with no more trouble to him than the superintendence of any *single* event. The whole of possibility must at all times be equally easy to the Being who possesses infinite power.

We have, therefore, abundant reason to rest in the

delightful assurance, that, of every event, which takes place, all the care is taken which perfect wisdom can dictate, and infinite goodness require—that all its consequences are foreseen and considered—that its time, its place, its measure, its duration, are all appointed by Him who first set in motion the complicated and mighty wheels which bring it round.

Of this sublime truth, which nothing but its great and cheering consequences can lead us to doubt, we may be further assured, by the consideration of the relation which the Creator necessarily bears to his creatures. He is not merely their Creator ; by the very act of creation he unites himself to them by a tie, but feebly represented by that which binds a parent to his child. He is their Father, in a much more near and real sense than any human parent is the father of his offspring ; and the best feelings of earthly parents must be exceeded by his, in the degree in which he is more perfect than they. Yet a good father lives but to labor for the welfare of his family. A tender mother, while she presses her child to her bosom, anxiously considers how she may best avail herself of the situation in which she is placed, to advance its happiness—wishes she had the command of circumstances, and could prevent the occurrence of every event capable of endangering its virtue and enjoyment.

This power, so vainly desired by human parents, is possessed by the Universal Parent. And is it possible to believe that he will not exert it for the welfare of his offspring ? With unerring wisdom and unbounded goodness, must he not *feel* towards them in the *best* manner ? And, since no power in the universe is capable of controlling his will, must he not at all times *act* towards them as these feelings dictate ?

No other consideration surely can be necessary, to make every intelligent being satisfied with his lot, and resigned to the dispensations which befall him. Many of the events of life, it is true, are deeply afflictive. Often our enjoyments seem given to us but to be removed, and even the most secure we hold by an uncertain tenure. The inequalities in health, in the duration of life, in the distribution of property—the prevalence of natural and moral evil in their thousand shapes, sometimes press with such severity upon the mind, as to create, even in the most pious and confiding, a doubt whether a Being of perfect benevolence be indeed seated at the helm of affairs. Our very hearts die within us when sickness and death assail our beloved friends. When the heart on which our image was engraven, and which beat with generous affection for us, is insensible and cold—when, in that dark and narrow bed, from which they cannot arise, sleep a father, a wife, a child, a friend, we feel a sorrow which refuses to be comforted. We dwell upon their excellences with a mournful pleasure. We think of the happy hours we have spent in their society—hours never to return—with a feeling which nearly approaches to despair. *That they are no more*—that they have ceased to think, to feel, to act, at least for us—that the eye which used to gladden at our approach is dark, and can no more beam upon us with tenderness and love—that those lips which have enlightened us with the counsels of wisdom, or soothed our souls with the accents of hallowed and virtuous affection, are silent for ever—no more to solace us in sorrow, no more to excite or to heighten our pleasure—while these thoughts press upon the mind, (and on the loss of our dear and virtuous friends they

do incessantly press upon it, sinking it to the dust,) the universe is a blank to us. No longer do we discover any traces of that supreme and unchanging goodness which we had been accustomed to contemplate with delight. But even in these moments of sadness we must be unjust to ourselves, and to the Author of our mercies, if we are not soon revived by the consciousness of benevolence, to which the severity of anguish may for a while have made us insensible. The privation of our friends, afflictive as it is, is never without benefit to us. It is then we feel that we are born for immortality—that the world is not our home—that we are travelling to a fairer clime. It is then that we enter into religion, and feel its genuine spirit. The same happy effects are often produced by sickness; and, to the natural and moral disorders which prevail, we owe the production and the growth of the highest excellences of our nature. In a word, an attentive consideration of what are termed the evils of life, enables us to discover so much of the truest benevolence in many of them, as may well induce us to bear with resignation those whose design we cannot so fully comprehend, until it shall please our heavenly Father to give us clearer light and stronger vision.

It is true that the evil we suffer, and, indeed, that the general train of events, is the result of laws which we cannot without absurdity suppose the Deity to be continually changing and suspending, for the benefit of individuals. Neither does any rational believer in a Providence maintain such an opinion. It is not necessary to his argument, to suppose that these general laws have ever *once* been suspended. From a conviction that he has evidence of the fact, he may believe that on

some occasions of supreme importance they have been suspended; but the great argument for the doctrine of a Providence would remain just the same, even though it could be demonstrated, that the laws by which the universe is governed have operated with undeviating regularity from the beginning. For whoever believes that these general laws were appointed by a Being of infinite wisdom and goodness, must admit that he foresaw all the consequences which would result from their operation, in every instant of time, and to every individual. If, therefore, when he appointed them, he foresaw that they would give rise to any event inconsistent with perfect benevolence, he would have so modified them, as effectually to have prevented its occurrence, or he would have provided for its counteraction, by the operation of secondary causes. Whether the Deity govern the universe by such an original adjustment as secures, with undeviating order, the occurrence of every thing in its proper season, place, and manner, according to the plan which his wisdom and goodness have ordained, or whether he govern it by a continual superintendence of events, every thing, on either supposition, is entirely in his hands. It is possible that the first is his plan; he may have adopted the second; both must be alike easy to him. But, since both were equally in his power, he can have been induced to choose the one rather than the other, only because the one is better adapted than the other to accomplish the purposes of benevolence; and it seems scarcely possible for us not to conclude, that these purposes may be better effected by the second than by the first, and therefore that this is the plan which he has adopted.

To sum up the whole argument, if of every event all the care is not taken which it is right should be taken, the administration of the world is imperfect; but the wisdom, power, and goodness, which are spent on the minutest and the meanest object we can contemplate, necessarily lead to the conclusion, that their Author possesses these attributes in a perfect measure; and, since they have been exerted in the production of particular objects, they must be employed in the government of the whole. We have therefore the most solid ground to adopt the sublime and cheering conclusion, that nothing can happen without the knowledge and permission of unerring wisdom and perfect goodness, and that all the vast affairs of the universe, in every particular circumstance, and in every instant of time, are under the wisest and the best direction.

The preceding arguments are founded on the perfections which the Deity is universally acknowledged to possess, and their truth must be admitted by every consistent theist. But if God have given to his intelligent offspring a revelation of his will—if he have altered the course of nature, in attestation of its truth—if, to prove the divinity of the mission of the great personage whom he raised up to communicate it, he endowed him with the power of performing such stupendous works as no being, unassisted by him, could possibly accomplish—if mankind were in want of a revelation—if the revelation actually given be in every respect suited to supply it—if it be calculated to rectify their errors, to purify their hearts, to exalt their hopes, to dignify their pursuits, to promote their truest welfare here, and to prepare them for pure and ever-increasing happiness hereafter—if all the circumstances

of time, place, and method, were admirably adapted to give it effect, and to secure the most important objects it is designed to accomplish, then is the doctrine of providence established on a new basis. Every Christian *must* believe that the affairs of mankind are under the direction of the Deity—that he has not cut himself off from all interference with the wants and happiness of his creatures—that he does interpose for their welfare as he sees occasion; for the Christian system is one of the most illustrious and delightful instances of that interposition.

If, from the fact itself of a divine revelation, we descend to the particular doctrines which it contains, we shall find the most decisive evidence of this truth. It is recognised in every page—it is affirmed on innumerable occasions, and in every variety of form. God is there represented as the Sovereign Arbiter of events—as the Great Being who sitteth on the circle of the earth, judging among the nations. It is he who causeth the sun to shine, and the rain to descend; it is he who giveth healthful and fruitful seasons; it is he who rideth on the wings of the wind; and it is his voice which thunders in the storm. By him kings reign and princes decree justice. He exalteth one and abaseth another. He turneth round the mighty wheel of events, retaining every individual in the situation which he judges fit. “He hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth; he hath determined their appointed times, and the place of their habitation.”

Our reverend Master assures us, that not even a sparrow falleth to the ground without the will of our heavenly Father, and that the very hairs of our head

are all numbered ; meaning, it is evident, that our most trifling concerns are appointed by him. “Behold,” says he, “the fowls of the air ; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ? And why are ye anxious about raiment ? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow ; they toil not, neither do they spin ; and yet Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which flourisheth to day, and to-morrow is cast into the furnace, will he not much more clothe you ? Take not, therefore, anxious thought, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed ? For your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.”

The argument which our Lord here employs is beautiful and affecting. Every one must have felt its force. When, in a solitary ramble, our eye has been struck with a little flower blooming in a secluded spot—when we have examined the perfection of all its parts—the richness, the variety, the exquisite beauty of its tints—when we have considered the care which has been taken of this humble plant, and the inimitable skill employed in the construction of it, which of us has not been deeply impressed with the truth which our Divine Instructor here teaches us ? Which of us has not said to himself, Can so much skill have been lavished in forming, can so much care have been taken in preserving, this little flower, and can I, humble and insignificant though I am, be overlooked by the Author of my

being? It is impossible. There must be a God ; there must be a Providence ; and I, and the myriads of creatures who, in common with me, enjoy the boon of existence, have reason to rejoice.

SECTION II.

OF THE MANNER IN WHICH THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT IS ADMINISTERED.

WHEN the Deity is represented as appointing and controlling every event, it may seem difficult to conceive how this can be reconciled with the agency and accountability of man. A little consideration, however, will show that these truths are not incompatible with each other.

Though the Sovereign Arbiter of events regulates and determines every thing, yet he carries on the administration of the world by the *instrumentality* of other beings. Seldom does he act *directly*; seldom is he the *immediate* cause of any thing. He has left the development of his vast plan to the operation of what are termed secondary causes; but these can act only so far, and in such a manner, as he has appointed.

The material world is governed by certain general laws, which are never interrupted except on occasions of supreme importance, foreseen and provided for from the beginning. These laws, though thus steady and invariable in their operation, bring about, in every instant of time, precisely that condition only of the material world which he appoints, and which is necessary to carry on his purposes with regard to his animal and moral creation.

The animal and moral world he governs by laws equally fixed and invariable: but, being of a nature different from that of the material world, they require to be governed by different laws. By different laws, therefore, they are governed; by laws admirably and exactly suited to its nature, each is guided to its destined end.

The material world, being without sensation and thought, is governed by a particular set of laws. The animal world, possessing sensation and thought, is governed by another set. By sensation and thought, an animal is induced to act. Every animal possesses a fixed and determinate constitution, according to which, sensation and thought are excited in it in a particular, determinate manner. The great agent in inducing sensation and thought in the animal, is the material world. A certain state of the material world will inevitably produce a certain sensation in an animal possessing a particular constitution; that sensation will produce a particular volition, and that volition will lead, *certainly*, to a particular action. It only requires, therefore, an exact knowledge of the constitution of the animal world, to render its state at all times precisely what may be required; for he who perfectly understands the constitution of the material and the animal worlds, and has a sovereign control over both, has only to adapt the state of the one to that of the other, to make both, at any and at all periods, exactly what he wishes. While every animal goes on regularly to exercise its different functions, he may at all times, maintain the whole animal world in the condition he pleases; for he may so modify the operation of the material world upon it, as inevitably to bring it into the state he

wishes. Thus a sovereign control may be exercised over the material and animal worlds, while both invariably act according to the settled principles of their nature.

If we ascend in the scale of creation, we shall find that the principle of the divine administration is exactly the same. Man is endowed not only with the faculties of sensation and thought, but with the power of distinguishing between the rectitude and immorality of conduct. He is capable of understanding his obligations, and the grounds of them. Certain actions appear to him to be good ; others he regards as evil. The performance of the one is attended with a consciousness that he has acted right, and excites the sensation of happiness ; the performance of the other is attended with an inward conviction that he has acted wrong, and produces misery.

All this takes place in a fixed and invariable manner, according to certain laws, which are termed principles of his nature, and the faculty on which this discrimination and feeling depends, is termed his *moral* nature.

Now it is obvious, that, to a certain extent, a being thus endowed may be governed exactly in the same manner as a creature who possesses only an animal nature. In him, as well as in the mere animal, sensations will be excited by the external circumstances, in which he is placed. In him, too, a particular sensation will excite a particular volition ; but the exercise of this volition will be attended with a result which is never found in the animal—with a consciousness that he has acted well or ill—with a feeling of approbation or of disapprobation—with a sensation of happiness or misery, arising purely from the action itself. This

train of sensation becomes itself a new source of action ; but it arises according to certain fixed laws, and operates as steadily as any other principle of his nature, or as any law of the material world. He, therefore, who perfectly understands *this* nature, who knows how every circumstance will affect this *moral* agent, and who has a sovereign control over events, can govern him with the same steadiness with which he regulates the animal or material world—can make him at all times feel, and think, and act, as may be necessary to carry on the great designs of his administration, without violating any principle of his nature. By adapting the particular situation in which he is placed to the particular state of his mind, he can excite whatever volition, and secure whatever action, he pleases. What is maintained, then, is that, with respect to every individual in the world, there is this exact adaptation of circumstances to his temper, his habits, his wants ; so that, while he is left to the full and free exercise of every faculty he possesses, he can feel and act only as the Sovereign of the Universe appoints ; because the circumstances which excite his sensations and volitions are determined by him. It is not just to suppose that the Deity exercises any such control over his creatures, as to force them to act contrary to their will, or to violate any principle of their nature. They always act, and must act, according to their will, and in conformity to their nature ; but at the same time he secures his own purpose, by placing them in circumstances which so operate upon their nature, as certainly to induce the conduct he requires.*

* It has been argued, by almost all who have hitherto written on the origin of evil, that its existence could not have been prevented,

Volition cannot arise, as is often imagined, at the pleasure of the mind. The term volition expresses that state of the mind which is immediately previous to the actions which are called voluntary ; but that state is not induced by the mind itself, but by objects operating upon it. The circumstances in which a percipient being is placed excite sensations, and sensations ideas. Sensations and ideas induce that peculiar condition of the mind which is termed pleasurable, or its opposite, which is termed painful. The feeling of pleasure excites desire ; that of pain, aversion. Will is the result of this state of the mind. Prove to the mind, that an object is desirable—that is, that it will induce pleasure—and you immediately excite in it the volition to possess it. Prove to it, that an object will

unless an absolute restraint had been placed upon the will. This is not true ; for there might have been given to mankind a knowledge of their welfare so clear and strong, as effectually to have secured their choice of it. In other words, they might have been brought under the influence of motives so powerfully determining them to the choice of good, that it would not have been possible for them, their circumstances remaining the same, to have chosen evil. This has been distinctly admitted by a late writer, who, though he has labored to reconcile, and sometimes very successfully, the evil which actually exists, with the wisdom and goodness of the Deity, yet has carefully avoided opposing or even alluding to those theological opinions which involve this subject in great and insurmountable difficulty. “ It is a position wholly untenable, that, according to our view of the subject, the degree of moral evil must necessarily have been as great as it is, unless an absolute restraint had been laid upon the will of man. Without entering into metaphysical discussions, it may be safely assumed, that the will is determined by the greater apparent good, and that when it makes a bad election, in defiance of reason and judgment, the dismissal of some present uneasiness, or the possession of some present gratification, is the greatest apparent good

occasion pain, and you excite the volition to avoid it. Volition, then, it is manifest, depends on the object, whatever it be, which the mind contemplates as desirable or otherwise. Take away the object, there is no volition ; satisfy it that the object can affect it neither with pleasure nor pain, there is no volition ; so that volition does not spring up in the mind of its own accord, and without cause, but is entirely dependent upon objects perceived to be, or supposed to be, desirable. In a word, and to repeat what has already been said, sensations and ideas are attended with the feelings of pleasure or of pain ; these induce desire or aversion, and these volition, with as much certainty and steadiness as the law of gravitation produces the phenomena which are dependent upon it.*

Volition being thus dependent upon the circumstan-

for the time being. Had, then, their real interest, upon a full view of their present and future condition, been placed before all mankind, with a clear distinctness which we can certainly conceive, because we have examples of it on record, free will, though exposed to less chance of error, would not have been annihilated ; and yet it would have been as morally impossible for man to choose evil in opposition to good, as we imagine it to be for the glorified inheritors of a future state, as it proved to be for Jesus Christ, during his adoption of human nature, with its temptations and infirmities, or, to go no further, as it appears to be for good men, when they approach the termination of their course, after a long perseverance in the habit and practice of virtue." *Treatise on the Records of the Creation.* By JOHN BIRD SUMNER, M. A., vol. ii., p. 228.

* This is merely an attempt to explain the manner in which volition arises. There can be no doubt that the will is invariably *determined* by the greater apparent good—or, to state the fact more generally, the will is invariably determined by motive, and with a steadiness and strength always in proportion to the uniformity and vigor of the motive.

ces in which an individual is placed, any given volition may be excited in him by a certain modification of his circumstances. We find that the tempers of different men are infinitely various. The Deity has made a corresponding variety in the situations in which he has placed them. To every individual he has assigned his allotted work; to every intelligent and moral agent he has given a certain part of his administration to carry on, and, in order to qualify him for it, he has adjusted to the particular constitution of his nature every circumstance of his being, from the first instance of his existence, to that which terminates his earthly career. If what is termed his natural disposition be such as would seem to render him incapable of performing it, the situation in which he is placed is adapted to it, and is such as to excite, to repress, or to modify it, till it becomes exactly what is necessary to fit him for his work; so that every individual is strictly an instrument, raised up and qualified by God, to carry on the wise and benevolent purposes of his government.

Suppose it is his will to lead men to the discovery of the most interesting truths, respecting the phenomena of nature, and the laws by which the universe is governed: he endows an individual with a clear and capacious mind; he places him in circumstances favorable to the development of his intellectual faculties; he leads him to observe, to reflect, to investigate; he forms him to those habits of patient and profound inquiry, which are necessary to elicit the truths to be disclosed, and sufficient to secure him from every temptation to carelessness and dissipation; he raises up a NEWTON. Suppose, after having, for wise, though perhaps inscrutable reasons, permitted the most low

and degrading notions to prevail, respecting his own character, government, and worship, he determines to lead back the minds of men to purer and nobler sentiments, and to overthrow those corrupt systems of religion which have prevailed for ages, and in the support of which the passions and the interests of men are now engaged: he raises up an individual whose mind he enlightens, whose soul he fills with an ardent zeal for the purity of religion and the simplicity of its rites, whose spirit danger does but excite, and suffering cannot subdue—who, though cities and empires arm against him, and one general cry of execration and menace follow him from land to land, goes on with undaunted courage to expose abuses, and to call in a louder and louder voice for reformation; it is the voice of LUTHER, which makes Corruption rage, and Superstition tremble. Suppose it is his will to save a people in love with liberty, and worthy because capable of enjoying it, from oppression, and to exhibit to the world an example of what the weak who are virtuous and united may effect against the strong who are corrupt and tyrannical; in the very season when he is needed he forms, and in the very station where his presence is necessary he places, a WASHINGTON. And suppose it is his will to pour the balm of consolation into the wounded heart, to visit the captive with solace, to extend mercy to the poor prisoner, to admit into his noisome cell the cheering beams of his sun, and his refreshing breezes: he breathes the genuine spirit of philanthropy into some chosen bosom; he superadds an energy which neither the frown of power, nor the menace of interest, nor the scorn of indifference can abate—which exhibits so strongly to the view of men

the horrors of the dungeon, as to force them to suspend for a while their business and their pleasures, to feel for the sufferings of others, and to learn the great lessons, that the guilty are still their brethren—that it is better to reclaim than to destroy—that the punishment which is excessive is immoral—that that which does not aim to reform is unjust, and that which does not actually do so, unwise: he gives to a suffering world the angel spirit of a HOWARD.

The bodily frame and the natural temper of an individual may seem, as has already been observed, ill adapted to execute the work which the Deity has determined to perform by him; yet no *force* is employed to induce him to do it. He is not *compelled* to act against his volition, but the circumstances in which he is placed are so adapted to his corporeal, his mental, and his moral constitution, as to excite the requisite volition. Suppose his bodily frame is weak, his temper irritable, his mind bold, impetuous, and rash; the part assigned him in the great drama of life requires uncommon bodily exertion. He must face the storm; he must endure the extremes of heat and cold; often he must lie unpillowed and unsheltered—his fatigue excessive—the supply even of the common necessities of existence scanty and irregular. How can all this be without his perishing? He is led to adopt that regimen and exercise, together, perhaps, with that course of medicine which strengthen his debilitated frame; gradually he is inured to fatigue and toil, and gradually he becomes capable of sustaining an astonishing degree of both. In order to ensure his success, the utmost patience, gentleness, caution, and foresight, are necessary, but his temper is irritable, and his mind bold,

impetuous, and rash. Experience teaches him the folly of indulging this morbid sensibility; it occasions him bitter mortification; his impetuosity hurries him into errors which bring with them, a long train of calamities; his boldness disappoints his cherished hopes; his rashness snatches from him some favorite object, at the very moment when success is placing it in his hand. The school of life teaches him to act better the part of life; present failure prepares him for future success; he learns that, if he would escape perpetual vexation and lasting misery, he must check the first risings of passion, reflect before he acts, and act with caution.

Suppose the disposition of another is so mild as almost to degenerate into weakness; his caution is in danger of inducing irresolution, and he is in the habit of considering and reconsidering every circumstance so minutely and so often, that he nearly loses the season of action. He is wealthy, attached to wealth, and full of the timidity which is so often the companion of riches. Yet this is the man who is to take a leading part in some great event, which requires promptitude, decision, uncommon effort, unconquerable perseverance, the certain sacrifice of a great portion of wealth—perhaps the loss of all. He is not *forced* along an unwilling agent; he is not surprised out of the caution of his character; he does not give up his wealth with reluctance and murmuring. He is led to view the event in which he is destined to take so great a share as so important, that even *he* ceases to doubt the propriety and necessity of endeavoring to effect it, and as so valuable, that he deems it worth the sacrifice he is called upon to make. The path marked out for him is so vividly displayed before his eyes, that he cannot

but see it. He thinks it is the path of duty; he knows it is that of honor; he believes it will be that of happiness. His agency in this event, therefore, is now so far from being against his volition, that restraint would be placed upon that volition, were he not the agent in it that he is. This, then, is the way in which the Deity influences his creatures. In order to secure his purposes, he does not cause them to act against their volition, but he so impresses their understandings and their hearts, as to make them feel that their happiness depends on the performance of the work he assigns them.

Nor is it any objection to this view of the manner in which the divine administration is carried on, that it implies a constant influence of the Deity over the human mind. There is no reasonable being who does not exercise some influence of this kind over the minds of others. What a powerful influence does the parent exert over the child, the master over the servant, brother over brother, and friend over friend! How can I measure the degree, how can I estimate the value of the influence which that revered instructor exercised over my mind, who first imbued it with the principles of wisdom and rectitude! What do I not owe to that dear companion of my youth, on whose early intercourse with me, memory still delights to dwell—who was my superior in age, in attainment, in wisdom, in virtue—who taught me so much while seeming to learn, and governed me so entirely without meaning to control! How many of the sensations which cheer my heart at this hour are the result of an influence which commenced at that distant period! How much of my present character is wholly dependent on that influence! It was he who corrected that disposition, the seed of

which had long lain dormant in my heart, which then was springing up rapidly, and which, had it been suffered to fix its root deeply there, would have made me a totally different being. It was he who first led me into that train of thought which directed the future pursuits of my mind, placed me in the station of life I occupy, formed the connections which bind me by the strongest and the sweetest ties to my fellow-beings, made me what I am, and determined what I am to be. It was my friend who influenced me. It was a higher Being, a wiser and better Friend, the unerring and unchanging Friend of both, who influenced him.

May not these considerations suffice to give us a clear and just conception of the kind of influence which the Deity exercises over us, and by which he works his purposes in us and by us? It differs from that of our wisest and best friend, only in being as much wiser and better, as wisdom and goodness in absolute perfection are different from the faint and transient indications of these attributes which are found in mortals.

The only objection of importance which can be urged against this view of the divine government, is, that it seems to lessen accountability, and to destroy the distinction between virtue and vice. Let us not be deceived by the sound of words. When we say that man is accountable, what do we mean? We can only mean that he will be punished for doing what he knows is wrong, and rewarded for performing what he is conscious is right. It is that rectitude of will which leads him to discharge his duty, which constitutes him virtuous; it is that perversion of mind which induces him to violate it, which renders him vicious. When

his volition is good, and he obeys it, we say that he is an object of approbation, and worthy of reward; when his volition is evil, and he yields to it, we say that he is an object of disapprobation, and worthy of punishment. It is the nature of his volition which determines our notion respecting his worth or demerit. We neither do nor ought to regard the *cause* of his volition. It is the evil of his will of which we disapprove, and to which it is necessary to apply the discipline of correction.

You demand why, since my volition is independent of myself, and excited by circumstances over which I have no control, am I accountable for its nature, or liable to punishment if it be evil? The reply is obvious. This objection is founded on the implied presumption, that volition is induced at the pleasure of the mind, and that it is the exertion of this power, in exciting an evil volition, which constitutes guilt. For, when it is asked, why am I to be punished for my volition, since it is independent of myself, the inquirer must pre-suppose that he is to be punished for his volition, *because* it is dependent upon himself, which is assuming as true the very point in dispute, and raising an objection on that assumption. If, however, there be any truth in the account which has been given of the origin of volition, that assumption is totally fallacious.

I am not to be punished for my volition, you say, because it is independent of myself, and excited by circumstances over which I have no control. I reply, if your volition be evil, and you obey it, it is that very circumstance which renders you worthy of punishment, and that the dependence or independence of the volition on yourself does not at all affect the question.

Your volition is evil ; you deserve punishment. Why ? *In order that that evil volition may be corrected.* Punishment is not retrospective, but prospective. You are to be punished, not because you have yielded to an evil volition, but in order that you may yield to an evil volition no more. To inflict pain for the past, any further than the past has reference to the future, is revenge, not punishment. Were it perfectly certain that an evil volition which is past would be attended with no ill consequences in time to come, it would be neither necessary nor just to visit it with suffering ; but, because an evil volition is evil—that is, because it tends to produce unhappiness—it is to be punished, in order that the misery it threatens may be prevented. It is the incorrect conception which is formed of the nature and object of punishment, therefore, which lies at the foundation of this objection, and which makes the subject appear so difficult to many persons ; and I cannot but think that all doubt and difficulty respecting it will be removed from the mind of every one who will consider with attention what is said on this subject in the third chapter (part ii.) of this work.

The train of circumstances in which an individual has been placed has given rise to a disposition, the indulgence of which is incompatible with his own happiness, and with that of his fellow-beings. This disposition it is necessary to correct. This correction is accomplished by causing him to pass through another train of circumstances, which makes him feel the evil of his conduct ; and this discipline, being attended with suffering, is expressed by the term punishment.

Such, then, being the foundation of praise and blame, of reward and punishment, it is obvious that a person

is an object of moral approbation, and is worthy of reward, when his volition is good, and when he obeys that volition—that he is an object of moral disapprobation, and is worthy of punishment, when his volition is evil, and when, notwithstanding the voice which speaks within him, and which warns him of its nature, he yields to its impulse. The gold which incites the midnight plunderer to rob is not blameable, though it is the immediate cause of the volition which induces the evil deed. It is the volition itself which is evil, and which requires to be rectified, and punishment is the process, the moral discipline, by which its correction is effected.

Thus, then, we seem to have a clear and just conception of the manner in which the whole train of circumstances, which forms the character and induces the conduct of moral agents, may be entirely the appointment of the Deity, while the agents themselves are at the same time the subjects of praise and blame, of reward and punishment.

Were there no evil in the world, there could be no possible objection to this view of the subject.* Were every one virtuous and happy, every heart would rejoice to trace to the Deity its excellencies and its pleasures. But how can He who is perfect in benignity, be the author of evil? It is this which perplexes the mind; and the answer to the question involves the great in-

* Neither would there be the same objection to it in the minds of many persons, did it only attribute to the Deity the production of natural evil. But the misery occasioned by an *earthquake*, or by *disease*, is often as great as that produced by the bad passions of mankind; and it is altogether as difficult to account for the existence of natural as of moral evil. Indeed, the same account must be given of both.

quiry, about which intelligent and pious persons have in all ages exercised their most anxious thoughts, and leads directly to the consideration of the *design* of the Deity in the administration of the world. Into the consideration of this subject, we shall enter in the next section; but, before proceeding to it, it may be proper to notice an objection of minor importance, which is sometimes urged against the doctrine of providence, and which has been stated and answered in so excellent a manner by Dr. Price, in his admirable *Disquisition on Providence*, (p. 47,) that it seems a kind of injustice to the subject to employ any language but his own :

“It has been often objected, that it is impairing the beauty of the world, and representing it as a production more imperfect than any work of human art, to maintain that it cannot subsist of itself, or that it requires the hand of its Maker to be always at it, to continue its motions and order.

“The full answer to this objection is, that, to every machine or perpetual movement, for answering any particular purpose, there always belong some *first mover*, some *weight* or *spring*, or other power, which is continually acting upon it, and from which all its motions are derived; nor, without such power, is it possible to conceive of any such machine. The machine of the universe, then, like all besides analogous to it, of which we have any idea, must have a *first mover*. Now it has been demonstrated; that this first mover cannot be matter itself. It follows, therefore, that this objection is so far from being of any force, that it leads us to the very conclusion which it is brought to overthrow.

“The excellence of a machine by no means depends on its going properly of *itself*—for this is impossible—but on the skill with which its various parts are adjusted

to one another, and all its different effects are derived from the constant action of some power. What would indeed make a machine appear imperfect and deformed, is assigning a separate power to every distinct part, without allowing any place for mechanism; and, in like manner, what would really make the frame of nature appear imperfect and deformed, is resolving phenomena too soon to the divine agency, or supposing it the *immediate* cause of every particular effect. But I have not been pleading for this, but only, that, however far mechanism may be carried, and the chain of causes extend in the material universe, to the divine power exerted continually in all places, every law, and every effect and motion in it, must be *at last* resolved. This is a conclusion which the modern improvements in natural philosophy have abundantly confirmed, and which some of the first and best philosophers have received; nor can that philosophy be otherwise than little and contemptible, which hides the Deity from our views, which excludes him from the world, or does not terminate in the acknowledgment and adoration of him, as the Maker, Preserver, and Ruler of all things.”*

* “The philosopher, who overlooks the traces of an all-governing Deity in nature, contenting himself with the appearances of the material universe only, and the mechanical laws of motion, neglects what is most excellent, and prefers what is imperfect to what is supremely perfect, finitude to infinity, what is narrow and weak to what is unlimited and almighty, and what is perishing to what endures for ever.”—*Mr. Maclaurin's Account of Sir Isaac Newton's Discoveries*, book iv., chap. ix., sect. 1.

“Sir Isaac Newton thought it most unaccountable to exclude the Deity *only* out of the universe. It appeared to him much more just and reasonable, to suppose that the whole chain of causes, or the several series of them, should centre in him, as their source, and the whole system appear depending on him, the only Independent Cause.”—*Ibid.*, sect. 5.

SECTION III.

OF THE DESIGN OF THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT.

SINCE, then, there is a perfect superintendence of all events, they must be directed to some end. The Deity must have some wise and benevolent object to accomplish, as the result of his administration, and that object can be nothing but the final and perfect happiness of his intelligent creatures.

With this view everything must be planned, and to this end both the natural and the moral disorders which prevail must necessarily conduce. No one can believe that the Deity has chosen evil for its own sake. Were this the case, he would not be good. Were he to cause the least degree of suffering, merely for the sake of producing pain, it would be utterly incompatible with benevolence. Evil in his hands, therefore, can only be the instrument of good. Nothing can have induced him to permit its existence, but the perception that, under his administration, it will terminate in the production of greater good than could have been enjoyed without it. When he created the world, and first set in motion that train of events which has induced the actual state of things, he foresaw that the partial evil which would arise, would terminate in the production of a larger sum of happiness than could have been occasioned by its prevention. This being the case, it is

the prevention, not the permission, of this evil, which would have militated against the perfection of his benevolence. That infinite wisdom and almighty power *may* secure this result from the partial prevalence of evil, is at least possible, and it is probable, because the supposition is perfectly reasonable in itself, and accounts for and reconciles every appearance.

It has been distinctly admitted, that these reasonings are conclusive, and that the doctrines founded upon them must be allowed to be established, if the principle be granted, that evil, under the superintendence of infinite wisdom and benignity, is the means of producing ultimate good.* It is impossible to desire any other concession than this.

That no formal proof of this principle was attempted in the preceding editions of this work, arose from the author's impression, that, in assuming it as true, he only

* "As to Dr. Smith's reasoning, it may indeed appear perfectly conclusive, to those who are willing to admit certain leading positions on which the whole is made to rest, as unquestionable truths."—*Eclectic Review*, October 1818, art. iii., p. 338. "It may be admitted, that there is a plausibleness in the hypothesis to which we have already alluded, and which includes the whole of the argument adduced in support of the doctrine of final restitution, namely, that evil, moral as well as natural, is but a *means* in the great machinery of the universe, essential to the higher good of the *creature*."—*Eclectic Review*, p. 346. "The argument *à priori*, in favor of the doctrine of universal restoration, is not only specious, but satisfactory, if the one thing which requires to be proved is taken for granted——if it be allowed that evil is a branch of the divine contrivance, for the production of a higher ultimate good to the creature—that it is but the *temporary name* of a particular class of the dispensations of sovereign beneficence—if, in a word, the foremost and favorite dogma of infidelity be conceded, that all things are as God makes them."—*Ibid.*, December 1818, art. iv., p. 539.

took for granted, that which all Christians not only believe, but glory in believing. That a theist—that a Christian, writing in the nineteenth century, in a country in which the doctrines of theology are so freely discussed, and the scriptures so generally read, should not only expressly deny the beneficial tendency of evil in the divine administration, but positively affirm that it is essentially and ultimately evil, and even that there is no proposition more indispensable to the existence of true religion, as a habit of the mind,* could scarcely have been expected. However, the position, that evil is not itself an end, but the means to some further end, and that that end is good, is not, it must be confessed, self-evident, and therefore it may be proper to state the proof of it. The believer in the doctrine of final restoration can have no other wish, than that it should be considered as just or fallacious, as this position is established or refuted. Without doubt, this is the point on which the controversy chiefly depends. The following considerations, which may perhaps tend to determine this previous question, are submitted to the calm and serious attention of the reader.

In the first place, the constitution of the physical and moral world is utterly inconsistent with benevolence, unless evil under the divine administration be the means of producing ultimate good. If good be the issue of the temporary prevalence of evil, there is no appearance in nature, and no event, and no series of events, in human life, which may not be consistent

* "We question if there is a proposition more indispensable to the existence of true religion, considered as a habit of the mind, than this, that evil is essentially and ultimately evil."—*Eclectic Review*, October, 1818, p. 446.

with perfect benevolence. If evil be essentially and ultimately evil, the Author and Governor of the world is malevolent.

The constitution of the physical world all admit is such as its Creator appointed; to the Creator, therefore, every one is obliged to refer all those appearances in it which are designated evil. The constitution of the moral world is equally the appointment of the same wise and good Being; for he gave to every man the nature he possesses; he placed every man in the station he occupies; immediately or mediately he is the cause of all the impressions which, from the cradle to the grave, have been made on every human being.

But men's characters are formed entirely, and can be formed only by the impressions which have been made on that nature which they have received from the hands of the Creator. If, then, God be the former of man's nature, and the Author of all the impressions which have induced his dispositions, and volitions, and actions, and if moral evil arise in this constitution, that moral evil must be referred to God's appointment. This is the clear deduction of reason; it is confirmed by the express declarations of scripture.*

It is common, among a certain class of theologians, to make a distinction between God's appointment and his permission. They allow that he permitted, but deny that he appointed, moral evil. Let us examine to what this distinction amounts. God, it is said, permitted moral evil. It will be granted that he must also

* "I form the light and create darkness. I make peace and create evil. I, the Lord, do all these things."—ISAIAH xlv. 6.—"Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?"—AMOS, iii. 6.

have foreseen it—that he must have foreseen it as the consequence of those circumstances in which he placed mankind, operating on the nature which he gave them. From the beginning he knew *certainly*, that such and such circumstances, operating on such a creature as man, would *certainly* give origin to moral evil. Be man's freedom of choice perfect as can be conceived, he who gave to him his propensities, bounding his knowledge by an appointed limit, granting him only a certain measure of experience, and bringing him under the influence of motives of a certain degree of strength, knew what, under these circumstances, that choice would certainly be—knew that, unless his propensities were altered, or his knowledge increased, or his experience extended, or the strength of his motives weakened, his choice would *certainly* be such as to involve the existence of moral evil. Knowing this, he altered nothing. He appointed, then, the propensities; he appointed the degree of knowledge; he appointed the measure of experience; he appointed the strength of motive; in a word, he appointed all the impressions of which he foresaw that the certain result would be the production of moral evil. The conclusion is inevitable, that he appointed the moral evil.

If, then, the existence of moral evil must be referred ultimately to the Deity, one of two things necessarily follows, either that he appointed it as a final end, or that he appointed it for some further end. If he appointed it as a final end, he has rested in the production of misery as an ultimate object, a purpose which is not only not consistent with benevolence, but which could have been devised only by being purely malignant. If, on the contrary, moral evil be appointed for

some further end, and that further end be not the infliction of pain, it must be the production of happiness; for no other can be conceived. Either, therefore, the Deity is malevolent, or evil in his hands is the means of producing ultimate good.

Further: the evidence, that physical evil is an instrument by which the most benevolent intentions are accomplished, is so clear and full, as to place the question, as far as physical evil is concerned, beyond all controversy. The sensation of hunger, for example, being painful, is in itself evil; but, to say nothing of the pleasure connected with the gratification of the appetite, hunger is the means by which an animal is induced to take food, which, by the constitution of its nature, is necessary to its existence. Here, then, is a case in which physical evil indubitably terminates in the production of good.

The proof of the beneficial operation of moral evil is equally decisive. The errors and crimes of which men are guilty teach them the most important lessons, awaken in their minds a sense of the excellence of virtue, a love of it, and a desire to possess it, of which they were wholly unconscious, and which are of the highest advantage to them in every future period of their being. A single instance of this kind decides the question; it affords an irrefragible proof, that evil is the means of producing incalculable good.

But, if we examine a little deeper, we shall find, in the very constitution of man's moral nature, irresistible evidence of the beneficial operation of moral evil. Moral evil is evil only because it produces misery; were it without this consequence, it would cease to be an object of aversion and avoidance. What, then, is

the tendency of the misery of which moral evil is productive? Invariably the correction of moral disorder. Every deviation from rectitude *must* be attended with suffering; sooner or later, in a greater or less degree, it must necessarily be so; but that suffering is never without a beneficial tendency, never without a tendency to induce penitence for the offence, and a more steady and undeviating adherence in future to the path of virtue. This tendency, it is true, does not always accomplish at present its designed end; but in many cases it accomplishes it perfectly, and therefore there is the best reason to believe, that ultimately it will accomplish it in all. In the mean time, no example can be adduced, in all the records of human experience, in which the certain and final consequence of any species of moral evil is pure, unmixed misery.

While, then, it is thus impossible to prove that moral evil ever terminates in positive evil, it can be demonstrated, that it often terminates in positive good. Now, if we know not a single case in which moral evil terminates in positive evil, it is most fallacious to argue, that it may nevertheless have this termination, because there are some instances of moral evil, the beneficial tendency of which we cannot at present perceive; but, if we do know many cases in which moral evil terminates in positive good, it is reasonable and just to argue, that it may be thus productive of ultimate good, even in those very cases, the beneficial tendency of which we cannot at present trace.

That a state in which there is a mixture of physical and moral evil, in which man is exposed to danger and temptation, in which he has much to fear and much to hope, in which he may render himself extremely miser-

able or extremely happy, according to the rectitude or disorder of his conduct—in a word, that a state of discipline, such as all believe the present to be, is admirably adapted to develope and to strengthen his faculties, and to form and improve his virtues, is universally admitted. But all the development and strength of his faculties, all the formation and improvement of his virtues, consequent to such a state, wholly depend on the prevalence of physical and moral evil. The constantly returning wants to which his nature is incident, the inadequacy and precariousness of the provision which is made to supply them, the absolute necessity he is under, from the danger of perishing by cold and hunger, to exert himself to render that provision more abundant and certain, afford the stimulus by which he is incited to cultivate the earth, and gradually to improve his condition, till, from that of a naked and houseless savage, he has surrounded himself with all the conveniences and comforts of civilized life.

Thus it is obvious, that physical evil is not only conducive to the improvement of the natural condition of man, but that it is in reality the very source to which he is indebted for the creation of all those conveniences and comforts which so eminently promote his happiness, and for the inestimable advantages which have resulted from the exercise of his faculties, in the cultivation of the various arts on which the fabrication of those conveniences and comforts depend. Nor is the tendency of moral evil to extend and improve his moral attainments less certain and direct. The most exalted virtues which can adorn human nature are not only promoted by, but could not possibly exist without, the prevalence of moral evil. If there were no contumely

and injustice, there could be no forbearance; if men never violated the rights of men nor neglected their mutual duties, there could be no forgiveness; if there were no tendency in human nature to pride, there could be no virtue in humility; if there were no wants, nor weaknesses, nor sorrows, and no dependence of men on each other, there could be no charity, no sympathy, no compassion, no generous forgetfulness of his own to minister to another's necessities; if there were no temptation, there could be no joy, no glory from successful resistance, and, if no danger, no fortitude and no victory.

In whatever shape or measure evil may assail the virtuous, it is universally admitted, that to them at least it is but another form of good. Whether he be placed under the discipline of physical or of moral evil, or of both, to the good man, according to the emphatic language of scripture, all will work together for good. When the psalmist says, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted," he records that experience of the moral benefit of adversity, to the truth of which, wise and reflective men, in all ages and all climes, have born testimony—to the truth of which, all men, however various the sources of their sorrow, and however different their modes of faith, without a single dissentient voice, still bear testimony. Nor can it be said, that it is to the virtuous only, that adversity is thus the minister of good; for adversity is frequently the means by which the vicious are made virtuous. The position, therefore, that evil, both physical and moral, under the government of the Deity, is the means of producing ultimate good, appears to be established on evidence as indubitable and complete as any subject of human belief.

This reasoning, it is obvious, is not adduced to prove that the punishment inflicted on the wicked in a future state will be corrective, and ultimately restore them to purity and happiness. The precise point which the preceding arguments are intended to establish, is, that evil, both physical and moral, is the means of producing ultimate good. One single case in which physical good is clearly and certainly produced by physical evil—one single case in which moral good is clearly and certainly produced by moral evil, is sufficient to establish this position—especially since, as has been shown, it is utterly impossible to prove the contrary; that is, since no instance can be pointed out in all nature, and no example in all the records of human experience, which renders it certain, or even probable, that physical or moral evil is absolutely and ultimately evil.

From the positions, then, that God is the author of that constitution of things in which physical and moral evil originates; that there are cases in nature, and instances in human experience, in which good indubitably results from evil, and especially that the influence of adversity, in the formation and improvement of human virtue, is oftentimes extremely great—from these positions, it does not *directly* follow, that all mankind will ultimately be made pure and happy; but it does *directly* follow, that evil is the means of producing ultimate good.

It does not seem possible to resist the force of this reasoning in any other way than by denying the position on which it is founded, namely, that God is the author of evil, and by ascribing the benefit which all admit sometimes results from evil, not to the natural

operation of evil, but to God's counteracting and overruling it for good.

With regard to the position, that God is not the author of evil, conscious as every human being must be of the inadequacy of his faculties to comprehend fully the origin of evil, it becomes him to speak on the subject with profound humility. But surely it is not presumption to endeavor to form a clear, while it is confessed that in the present state it is not possible to form an adequate, conception of it. In tracing back the origin of evil, then, unless the mind be paralyzed by false fear, the offspring of false system, and unless the doctrine of Manicheism be revived, it should seem no more possible to stop till we have arrived at the appointment of the Deity, than, in tracing back the series of second causes, it is possible to stop till we have arrived at the great First Cause of all things.

The argument, that the First Cause must be himself uncaused, because an infinite number of dependent beings requires a first and independent cause, as much as any one in the series, appears to be clear and irresistible. Equally clear and irresistible is the argument, that the same Being is the author of evil, because he is the author of the constitution of nature, both physical and moral, and because he appointed all the circumstances, the operation of which he foreknew would certainly involve the existence of evil.

It deserves, too, to be well considered, that the hypothesis, that evil is the appointment of the Deity, for the promotion of greater ultimate good, is adequate to remove every difficulty; while the doctrine, that he partially counteracts its operation, is extremely imperfect. Of physical evil, it surely cannot be said that God has

no other relation to it than that of benevolent counteraction. Physical evil is as strictly dependent on the operation of the laws of nature, as any physical phenomena whatever. The structure of the bodies of animals, by which they are subject to disease and suffering—certain constitutions of the air, which at one time directly impair or destroy animal life, and at another blast the fruits of the earth, by which life is supported—earthquakes, pestilence, and the calamities incident to them—the evil which arises in all these cases is as strictly dependent on the operation of the laws of nature, as the gravitation of bodies to the earth. To him who appointed these laws, this evil must necessarily be referred; and it is obviously insufficient to say, of any benefit which may result from their operation, that it is the consequence only of his benevolent counteraction.

In like manner, the suffering connected with moral disorder as necessarily results from the constitution of the moral nature of man, as physical evil results from the constitution of nature. That man must be rendered unhappy by every deviation from rectitude, in as much the consequence of the law of his nature, as the due nourishment of his body by the reception of nutritious food. That inestimable advantages result from this moral constitution, is universally admitted; and it is obviously insufficient to say of these, that they are the consequence merely of God's counteracting and overruling evil; for surely there can be no more certain evidence, that God has appointed or ordained a thing, than that he has made it the invariable result of a general law.

In a word, the brief, but full answer to the hypothe-

sis we are considering, is, that, if God benevolently counteract evil, he makes it the instrument of good. The imagination cannot conceive of his counteracting evil in any other way than by his making it the instrument of producing greater ultimate good. Upon this very hypothesis, therefore, it must be admitted, that evil is, sometimes, at least, the instrument of producing ultimate good. The essential difference between God's benevolent counteraction of evil and his benevolent causation of it, is, that, according to the former hypothesis, the beneficial effect of his interference is partial and imperfect; according to the latter, it is universal and complete.

Upon the whole, it is perfectly evident, that neither the nature nor the government of the Deity can be benevolent, unless evil be, in every instance and every measure in which it prevails, through the vast system which he at first constituted, and which he constantly superintends, not an end, but the means to some further end, namely, that of promoting ultimate good—good, higher in nature, and greater in degree, than could have been produced without it.

Many attempts have been made to reconcile the existence of natural and moral evil with infinite wisdom and goodness, on the principle, that, by the operation of evil, the sum of happiness produced to mankind collectively is greater than the sum of misery. It has even been conceived, that this may be the case, though by far the greater number of mankind, after having been exposed to sin and misery on earth, not only fail to obtain happiness in a future state, but suffer excruciating and unceasing torment through all the ages of eternity. How the few who escape this tremendous

and general ruin can, by any measure or duration of felicity, cause the collective sum of happiness to exceed that of a misery which must ever be as lasting and more general than itself, it seems impossible to conceive. It is believed that those who die in unrepented sin will be as greatly wretched as the penitent and pious will be greatly happy—that the disproportion in their number will ever be at least as great as it is at present, and the disproportion in their destiny infinitely greater; how, then, upon the supposition of unmitigated, unmingled, and everlasting misery, is it possible, that the evil which has produced this misery can be the means of increasing the collective sum of happiness?

It is only necessary to bring the mind to the steady and distinct conception of what is really supposed in a misery which involves the great majority of mankind, and which is at once as great as can be endured, and as lasting as eternity, to perceive that its existence is impossible, unless the author of the system in which it prevails be cruel and malignant in the highest degree. That myriads and myriads of human beings, constituting a number so vast, that the imagination can form no adequate conception of it, should be doomed to inexpressible torment, and that this tremendous mass of *never-ending* misery should be adopted by a Being of infinite wisdom and goodness, as the means of producing a greater collective sum of happiness to his creatures, is an hypothesis which the heart, were it permitted to indulge its genuine feeling, must execrate, and the understanding, did not system prostrate it in the dust, reject with indignation.

There is in this hypothesis a difficulty which ought

never to be lost sight of. It supposes the great majority of mankind to be sacrificed (and O, how sacrificed!) to comparatively a few; while, to the great majority thus sacrificed, in no period of their being, in no manner, in no measure, is any compensation afforded. In no other part of the great system with which we are acquainted, is there anything like this! In the whole economy of nature, there is nothing bearing the slightest analogy to it!

The wisdom and goodness of the Deity, in the permission of natural and moral evil, may be perfectly vindicated, and can be perfectly vindicated, only on the supposition that, considered in relation to the entire period of his being, *it increases the sum of happiness to every individual*. And that this will be the ultimate issue of evil, is confirmed by everything which reason and experience teach concerning its nature and tendency, and is opposed by nothing but the prejudices of a system which leads to consequences truly horrible, and which is supported by no appearance in nature, by no testimony of experience, and by no induction of reason.

If it be said that this is assuming more than is absolutely necessary to vindicate the divine perfections, it must at least be granted, that the lowest ground it is possible to assume is, that, how much soever evil may prevail, every individual will nevertheless experience, the whole period of his being considered, more happiness than misery. If this position be denied, no ingenuity can reconcile the prevalence of evil with the government of infinite wisdom and goodness. If it be granted, the doctrine of endless misery must be abandoned at once, and the mind must ultimately rest (as

will be largely shown hereafter), in the conclusion, that evil is designed to be, and actually is, the means of increasing the ultimate sum of happiness to every individual.

If it be objected that, according to this view of evil, the Deity has himself violated the command which he has given to his creatures, and has done evil in order that good may come, it is replied, that the consequence may be readily admitted, and that the principle which justifies the divine procedure is obvious. To allow to such a being as man the liberty of doing evil with a good design, would be fatal, because he cannot *certainly* foresee the effect of his conduct, nor control events in such a manner as to *secure* his purpose. But God, being possessed of perfect knowledge and almighty power, must be acquainted with the result of all possible combinations of circumstances, and must be able to secure it against all miscarriage. It may therefore be supremely benevolent in him to do what it would be ruinous in man to attempt.

From the whole of what has been said, then, it appears that we may, without presumption, with the full concurrence of reason, and on the clear warrant of Scripture, affirm that, when the Deity placed man in such circumstances as he foresaw would be attended with the production and indulgence of evil passions, he at the same time perceived, that under his direction these passions would produce, *to mankind collectively, and to every individual particularly*, a greater sum of happiness than could have existed without them. That the evil which results from the indulgence of the bad passions of mankind *may* be made the means of eradicating them, and of training the mind to purity

and benevolence, we have, as has been fully shown, unquestionable proof in the daily events of life. This, then, which we see to be their effect, with regard to some individuals at present, it is contended, will be their ultimate effect with respect to all mankind—that this is the final cause of their existence, and THAT THE GREAT DESIGN OF THE DEITY IS TO BRING ALL HIS INTELLIGENT OFFSPRING TO A STATE OF PURITY AND HAPPINESS.

This doctrine reconciles every difficulty, and throws a glorious and cheering light on all the dispensations of the Deity. If it be true, everything was planned by benevolence, everything is guided by benevolence, everything will terminate in benevolence, in eternal and ever-increasing felicity to all.

This doctrine, which represents the character of the Universal Parent in the most glorious and affecting light, and is benevolent in its tendency beyond any other opinion whatever, has been opposed with much violence by some of the best of men, and the worst have as loudly exclaimed against it. The prejudices of the good and the bad, of the pious and the profane, equally oppose it ; yet there is no other truth which seems to be supported by so many *different* appearances, or by evidence derived from so many different sources. And, since it throws so much light on the character and dispensations of the Deity, and is replete with such solid consolation, it may be useful to examine it somewhat at length—first considering some of the arguments which appear to favor it, and next the objections which are usually brought to oppose it.

Because this doctrine maintains that mankind will finally be restored from sin, and from the present and

future misery which is its consequence, to a state of purity and happiness, and that this will ultimately be the case with respect to every individual of the human race, it is sometimes termed the doctrine of UNIVERSAL RESTORATION, which phrase, merely for the sake of brevity, we may hereafter frequently employ.

Some dispute, however, has arisen respecting the nature of the evidence which alone can establish this doctrine. It will be vain to proceed, therefore, before the principles are settled, upon which it will be proper to conduct the investigation. The nature of the evidence which will be deemed legitimate and satisfactory, must be determined before it will avail to adduce any.

Part Second.

INTRODUCTION.

OF THE KIND OF EVIDENCE WHICH IS NECESSARY TO
ESTABLISH THE DOCTRINE OF THE ULTIMATE PURITY
AND HAPPINESS OF ALL MANKIND.

SOME persons maintain that the only evidence which can establish the doctrine of Universal Restoration is the *direct* testimony of scripture. They seem to think that every proof, however solid in itself, if it cannot be adduced in the very words, or at least if it be not borne out by the express testimony of revelation, is insufficient.

Others contend, that there is nothing in this doctrine which can prevent the application of such principles or modes of reasoning to it, as are universally deemed just and satisfactory when applied to other subjects—that, if there be any doctrine of religion, of which we can obtain a well-founded assurance, by considerations which do not derive their force from the express declarations of scripture, or which are altogether independent of it, there can be no reason why the doctrine of Universal Restoration may not be one of these, and

that, if this opinion can be established upon a just and solid principle, it is sufficient, whether that principle be derived from revelation or from any other source.

If the first of these classes will be content to say, "No evidence will be sufficient to establish this opinion, unless it harmonize with scripture," there will remain no difference whatever between them ; and surely it is absurd to endeavor to establish a distinction where there ought to be the greatest union. Every principle, from whatever source it be derived, if it be just, must harmonize with scripture, and all scripture, if it be genuine, and rightly understood, must harmonize with every just principle.

Evidence founded upon a just principle is satisfactory, from whatever source it be derived ; the only question which can effect the solidity of the conviction it produces, is whether it be just, not whether it have this or that origin. One single solid argument in favor of the doctrine of Universal Restoration, deduced from the perfection of God, for example, is sufficient to establish its truth. One single solid argument deduced from scripture is likewise sufficient ; but, if a solid argument can be derived from both, the conviction produced will be more complete. In a word, if this doctrine be true, it can be established both by reason and by revelation ; if it be false, it can be refuted by both.

It is for this reason, that the evidence of both will be adduced in the following pages. The testimony of reason adds an unspeakable value to the declarations of scripture—not because established scripture wants the assistance of man's reason, but because, if a doctrine be contrary to reason, we know that is not the

word of God. It betrays an ignorance of the nature of both, to pay no regard to a clear deduction of reason because it is not revelation, or to maintain that what is contrary to reason is revealed in scripture; for truth cannot be inconsistent with reason, nor can scripture and truth clash.

In adducing the evidence in favor of the doctrine of the ultimate restoration of all mankind to purity and happiness, it may be proper to begin with the statement of that which is derived from considerations which have no direct reference to the *positive* declarations of scripture—then to examine the objections which are urged against it, whether derived from scripture or from other sources, and, in the last place, to state those express declarations of scripture which appear to establish it.

If it can be shown, that all the perfections of the Deity, that the nature of man, and the nature and design of punishment, are completely in favor of this doctrine; that the objections which have been urged against it, whether derived from reason or revelation, may be satisfactorily removed; that the arguments which have been supposed to establish contrary opinions are not conclusive; and that the scriptures contain some passages which can have no meaning unless this doctrine be supposed, others which cannot be true unless it be admitted, and others which seem directly and positively to favor it—this would seem sufficient to convince a candid inquirer of its truth; because, in this case, the evidence in its favor will not only be direct and positive, but will be founded also on the most firm and solid principles, and there will be no evidence against it. It will be the object of the fol-

lowing pages to establish, in order, each of the above positions.

It may be proper, however, to observe, that arguments may in reality be derived from scripture, which do not at first sight appear to be so. Revelation has poured so much light upon the mind, and has led us into such a just way of reasoning, concerning God, concerning his design in creation, and his government of the world, that our conceptions and arguments, even when they do not appear at all to depend upon this heavenly guide, attain a degree of sublimity and truth, to which they would never have arrived without it; and we often appear to be following the deductions of our own understanding, when in reality we are only repeating in other words, and with other associations, the declarations of scripture. Why, without any direct or apparent dependence upon revelation, are we now able to form such pure and exalted conceptions of the Supreme Being, as were totally unknown to the great sages of antiquity? It is because revelation has furnished us with the light which has conducted us to these noble and just conclusions. Of our views of the perfections of the Deity, of his dispensations to his creatures, of his works and of his ways—in a word, of all the principles upon which the subsequent reasoning is founded, this observation is peculiarly true. Although, therefore, the arguments contained in the second part of this work may not appear, at first sight, to be founded upon the scriptures, it is not just to conclude that they have a different origin; for, *in so far as they are true*, they must be, either directly or indirectly, derived from it, since there is no reason to believe that they could have been formed by any mind which had not been illumined by this divine light.

OF THE EVIDENCE IN FAVOR OF THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ALL MANKIND TO PURITY AND HAPPINESS, DISTINCT FROM THAT AFFORDED BY THE EXPRESS DECLARATIONS OF SCRIPTURE.

THE evidence in favor of the doctrine of Universal Restoration, distinct from that afforded by the express declarations of Scripture, may be arranged under three heads, namely: that which is deducible from the perfections of God, from the nature of man, and from the nature and design of punishment.

It is proper to say, that the arguments adduced under each of these particulars are distinct from those afforded by the express declarations of Scripture; because, how much soever they may really depend upon the light of revelation, (and for the reason already assigned they may really depend upon it in a very great degree,) yet they are framed without any direct reference to it, and seem in general to be derived from the nature of things. Reasoning of this kind is peculiarly satisfactory; and, if the *positive* declarations of Scripture can be shown to coincide with it, to include it, and to be founded upon it, it must produce a conviction as strong as can be effected by any thing which is not an object of sense, or which cannot be proved upon the principles of geometry.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF THE DOCTRINE OF
UNIVERSAL RESTORATION, DERIVED FROM THE PER-
FECTIONS OF GOD.

SECTION I.

OF THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

WERE it assumed, that he who gave us existence, and bestowed upon us all things richly to enjoy, is a Being of infinite goodness, it would be only taking for granted what all Christians, and even all theists, allow. It may be proper, however, to state briefly the evidence of the perfect benignity of the Universal Parent.

Because the phenomena of nature cannot be accounted for without the supposition of a self-existent Being, the original cause of all things, we conclude that such a Being exists, and that, since he is the cause of all other things and beings, he must be independent of them. Because he who could create such a world as this must be able to do any thing which is not in itself a contradiction, we infer that his power is without limits. Because the exhibitions of wisdom, in every part of nature with which we are acquainted,

surpass all assignable limits, and because we cannot but conceive, that the intelligence which is displayed in the constitution of the world is adequate to the performance of any thing which is in its own nature possible, we conclude also, that his wisdom is infinite. From these principles, his goodness follows as a necessary consequence.

For the Original Cause of all things, being absolutely independent, being infinite in power and wisdom, must be good, since evil is the result of want, weakness, or error. But he who is infinite in power can have no want; neither can he have any weakness; and he who created all things, and gave them the relations they possess, cannot but know them perfectly, and therefore must be incapable of error.

That evil can arise from no other source than those which have been mentioned, will appear evident, from considering the origin of any form of it with which we are acquainted. Whence, for example, arise envy, malice, hatred, injustice? Envy is the malicious coveting of a good possessed by another; something is desired which cannot be attained. He, then, who has it in his power to obtain all good, must be incapable of envy. Injustice is the withholding of a good, real or supposed, from another whose right it is; he who has it in his power to obtain all good, must therefore be incapable of injustice. And the same may be said of every description of moral evil whatever.

If an intelligent Being perceive perfectly the true relation of all things to each other, so as so be incapable of mistake, and if at the same time he have the whole of possibility in his power, he must, in the nature of things, be incapable of evil; because he cannot

commit evil through ignorance, and there can be nothing to induce him to act with an evil design. This, then, is exactly the idea which we form of the Supreme Intelligence.

If this deduction of the goodness of God, from the other essential attributes of his nature, be just, it will be confirmed by the appearances of his works. What he has done will satisfy us that we are right in our conception of what he is.

In endeavoring to ascertain from his works, whether or not the Deity be benevolent, we must conduct our investigation in the same manner as when we endeavor to discover his other perfections; because in the objects around us we perceive so many marks of design, such various and exquisite contrivances, we conclude that their author is intelligent. In like manner, if it appear that this design is good design, that this contrivance ministers not only to convenience, but to enjoyment, it will follow that its author is good.

Now there are two facts, of the certainty of which no one who examines the state of the animal creation can doubt, which place the goodness of the Creator beyond all question. The first is, that pleasure is imparted to animal sensations, when no cause can be assigned for it but the gratification of the animal; the second is, that there is more happiness than misery in the world.*

The first, if it can be clearly proved, affords a conviction, the certainty of which cannot be exceeded by any kind of evidence whatever—not even by that which we derive from geometry or from sense. The

* Each of these positions has been stated and illustrated with admirable force and beauty, by Paley, in his *Natural Theology*.

determination to create an animal supposes a determination to endow it with all the faculties which are necessary to its existence. These faculties, therefore, however multiplied, beautiful, or exquisite, cannot prove the goodness of the Creator; because, being necessary to the existence of the animal, they must have formed a part of any design to create, whether good or malevolent. But if these faculties be so constituted, that they not only give existence, but make that existence happy—if in general they cannot be exercised without affording enjoyment as well as life, then there is not only design, but good design. Then it is evident, that the Creator not only meant to give existence, but to make that existence a blessing.

With all the animal functions, then, this is the case. They all minister to enjoyment, while they sustain the mysterious principle of life. There is not a single exception. There is not one animal function, the common and natural exercise of which is painful. There is not one whose natural exercise is not productive of pleasure.* Whence could this possibly happen, but from the goodness of the Creator?

He who is infinite in power might have so constituted an animal, as to make the exercise of every function which is necessary to its existence productive of exquisite suffering; and had his nature been malignant, and his design in creation been to gratify a malignant disposition, he would certainly have done so. Constituted as animals at present are, it is necessary to the

* Indeed, the very application of the term natural is a decisive proof of the goodness of the Deity. When the functions of an animal are so exercised, as to afford it vigor, ease, and enjoyment, we say it is in a natural state.

continuance of their life, that they should eat. The act of eating might have been made productive of exquisite misery, and the animal have been infallibly impelled to it, by making the pain of hunger still greater than that of eating. Here, then, was an opportunity of diffusing over the whole animal creation a source of continual torment. But, instead of this, the act is made pleasurable, and thus becomes the source of continual gratification. How can this be accounted for, but upon the supposition, that he who had the diffusion of both equally in his power; and who chose to diffuse happiness rather than misery, is good?

Constituted as animals at present are, and placed amidst such objects as those which surround them, it was necessary that they should have the senses of sight and of touch. Now the eye might have been so constructed, as to receive from every object the same kind of impression as is felt when it is cast upon any thing that is monstrous. The sense of touch might have been so formed, as to impart, upon the contact of every object, a sensation similar to that which is felt when the surface of the body is pierced with thorns; and, as the body must always be in contact with some external object, this torment might have been experienced during every moment of existence. Why, then, is not this the case? Why, on the contrary, do we continually receive the most exquisite gratification from all our senses? It can be resolved into nothing but the pure benignity of the Creator.

This annexation of pleasure to the exercise of animal functions, when that pleasure is not at all necessary to animal existence, is a decisive proof of the goodness of the Deity; for it is to produce happiness without

doing any thing else; it is to rest in it as an ultimate object; it is to do this in proportion as happiness prevails beyond what is necessary to life—that is, in proportion as it prevails at all. But to produce happiness for its own sake, to rest in it as an ultimate object, is of the very essence of benevolence, and pure and perfect benevolence can do no more. Neither can such a provision for enjoyment possibly arise from any thing but benevolence; for an evil nature must necessarily be incapable of it. In proportion, then, as happiness is diffused over the creation of God, is the plenitude of the proof that he is good.

The force of this reasoning will appear to increase in proportion as the faculties of an animal are exalted, because the extension of the capacity of enjoyment affords a greater opportunity for the display of that goodness which provides for its full and constant supply. Thus man, endowed with higher faculties than those which characterize mere animal existence, is capable of higher happiness. To him, in addition to the pleasures of sense, for the enjoyment of which he is fitted by the constitution of his nature no less than other animals, are afforded the nobler gratifications which arise from the exercise of his intellectual faculties. These faculties are given him as the means of improving his condition. Continual exertion is indispensable to their development; and so admirably is the structure of society adapted to their nature, that no one can exist in it without exerting them. Either to procure the means of comfortable subsistence in the rank in which he is placed, or to raise himself to a higher station, or to obtain that measure of knowledge, and that degree of general cultivation, which the pro-

gress of society has rendered indispensable to his condition, every one finds himself compelled to the continual exertion of his faculties. By the operation of the same causes, arts are cultivated, manufactures flourish, commerce is extended, science facilitates the movements of the vast and complicated machine which is set in motion, and literature unfolds the treasures which reward the culture of its ample regions. To society, the advantage of the constant activity is incalculable, and it is of inestimable utility to the individual. In these pursuits, his highest powers are called forth and invigorated, and his purest and noblest pleasures experienced. Yet the intellectual faculties are never exerted for the sake of the pleasure they afford. Pleasure is the unthought of, but the invariable consequence of their exercise. Distinction, fame, wealth, are the objects for which they are exerted; pleasure is the unsought, the incidental, yet the almost constant result of their exertion. This pleasure, therefore, is as purely a gift of the Creator, as that which arises from the gratification of the senses, and proves as decisively his benevolence. It is pleasure gratuitously added to the exercise of faculties which might be as perfectly exerted without it as with it; it affords a beautiful example of pleasure rested in as an ultimate object.

This pleasure, which is connected with the exercise of a cultivated understanding, is of constant occurrence; it is pure and unalloyed; it increases with the improvement of art and the knowledge of nature, and has no other limit than the perfection of the one, and the boundary of the other. He whose perceptions are refined by cultivation, is as if he were endowed with new senses, and he walks continually forth into a

world of being and of beauty, to which other men are strangers. Everything is to him the minister of improvement or of gratification. The sun, the earth, the ocean, the mountain's towering height, the green and golden vale, stretching far out below "its mantle gay,"

And every odorous plant and brighter thing,
Born of the sunny skies and weeping rain,
That, from the bosom of the Spring,
Starts into life and beauty once again—

every object that strikes the sense, or that awakens fancy, raises in such a mind trains of ideas the most soothing, the most elevating, and the most delightful. And yet, that a pile of ruins, "some abbey's mouldering towers"—that the productions of art, or the discoveries of science—that painting, music, poetry, eloquence, philosophy, should excite or recall pleasurable emotions, is no more a necessary consequence of the exertion of the mental faculties, than that a beautiful color or harmonious sound should agreeably affect its appropriate sense. Pleasure is gratuitously superadded by the abounding goodness of the Creator. And when the pure nature of that pleasure is considered, the abundance of the objects, and the frequency of the occasions which excite it, together with its wonderful tendency to expand the mind, and thereby to enlarge the capacity it supplies, it is surely impossible not to admire and adore the goodness which, in thus constituting the human faculties, has made such ample and unfailing provision for human enjoyment.

The second fact upon which the benevolence of the Deity is founded, is, that there is more happiness than misery through the whole of the animal creation.

Were it not so, we should see all animals tired of life, and eager to throw off the burthen of existence. But the reverse is the fact. What exertions do they not all make to prolong their being! How are all their faculties continually upon the stretch to preserve themselves from danger! How various, how wonderful are their resources! How tenaciously do they cling to existence, even to its latest moment!

What a scene of enjoyment does the tribe of insects, of fishes, of all the inferior animals, exhibit, from the beginning to the end of life! Those whose conformation fits them for motion, how delighted are they to run, to fly, to leap, to swim! How incessantly are they gliding from place to place, without any apparent object, deriving gratification from the mere exercise of their limbs! Those which delight in rest, how happy are they in the loneliness of the shade—in basking in the sun, or grazing in the field! In a summer evening, how exhilarating is it to the spirits, to leave for awhile the busy hum of men, and wander beneath the clear blue sky, and amidst Nature's own works! What millions of happy creatures everywhere surround us! Above, around, beneath—everything is in motion, and everything is happy. The air, the earth, the water, every tree, and every shrub, and every little blade of grass teems with delighted existence. Scarcely can we fix the eye upon a single spot in which there is not life and happiness! Which of the millions of creatures that press upon our sight is in pain? Which of them does not by every movement declare, that, to the full measure of its capacity, it is happy?

This felicity seems to belong to, and to characterize

animal life, during the whole period of its existence. It is exempt from almost all the sources of infelicity which impair the happiness of man, and fill him with gloom and sorrow. It is not subject to much disease, and that which accident or natural decay does induce, is of short continuance. It spends the measure of its days in sportiveness and pleasure, and when its last moment comes, it arrives without giving any previous indication of its approach, and all consciousness ceases suddenly, and with little pain.

Now, when we consider the extent and the *fulness* of creation—when we remember that it is scarcely possible, as has just been observed, to fix the eye upon the minutest spot, where there is not life—when, under this impression, we endeavor to calculate how many creatures there sometimes are upon one single leaf—upon all the leaves on one tree—how many, therefore, in one field—how many in all the fields which the eye can take in at a single glance—how many in all the fields in one country—when we remember that each of these creatures is in a state of positive happiness, and then endeavor to calculate the collective sum of enjoyment in one country—can we help exclaiming, What an effort of benevolence was creation! Can we doubt the goodness of its Author?

Even among men, there is in reality much less misery than is commonly imagined. Many persons can recount every period of their life in which they were unhappy; others can scarcely mention a single misfortune which ever befell them; and those on whom the afflictive dispensations of Heaven have fallen more heavily, how distinctly are these days of visitation marked in their memory! But can they recount with

equal facility their days of happiness? Can they number up, not their moments or their hours, but even their weeks and their months of enjoyment? They have forgotten the periods of their happiness; they remember those only in which they were miserable. The reason is obvious. The one is a common occurrence, the usual and ordinary state of things—the other is a singular event. It happened only at distant intervals, was quite out of the general course, and therefore the mind distinctly marked, and the memory retains it. We notice an eclipse; we talk of it; but we do not so much observe the daily splendor of the sun. We may enjoy its light and heat many months without thinking of it; and the reason is the same in both cases. We observe what is unusual, but that which is familiar makes no remarkable impression. This consideration alone is sufficient to convince us, that we enjoy infinitely more than we suffer.

But we are able to go much farther, and to affirm, that even in those periods, few as they are, in which we were unhappy, and which we have been accustomed to consider as distinguished by misery alone, we really suffered very little, compared with what we have been in the habit of believing. We are seized, let us suppose, with an acute disease. It attacks some vital organ, induces extreme debility, and threatens the speedy extinction of life. All this time, the bodily suffering inflicted is often slight. The most violent diseases—that is, those which most surely and suddenly destroy life—are by no means painful. Indeed, those which occasion great pain are remarkably few, and those which produce both severe and constant pain are still more rare. Yet, from the general mode of expression,

and perhaps from the prevailing impression of the mind, it would seem as if much suffering were experienced from the commencement till the complete termination of a disease; but this is certainly not the case. In many diseases of a most afflictive nature, hour after hour passes away without anything being felt which can justly be termed pain. Paroxysms of suffering sometimes occur; but it is seldom that they last long. Rest and ease speedily succeed; and, indeed, exacerbation implies remission. Nor ought it to be forgotten, that these intervals are often amongst the sweetest and most valued moments of existence—the preceding pain giving a keen and exquisite relish for enjoyment—while the thoughts with which the mind amuses itself in sickness, the hope of recovery, and the attentions of kind and tender friends, greatly lessen and counterbalance the actual sum of misery endured. Indeed, disease, taking the most extensive view of it, seems destructive to the life rather than to the enjoyment of the sentient being; and, in fact, the first is the final cause of disease; the second is only an accidental consequence.

These observations may be applied with equal justice to the afflictions of the mind. Whatever be the nature or magnitude of the calamity with which it is visited, it is never constantly, nor even for a long period together, under its influence. Whoever will consider the conduct of his mind under the severest misfortune, will soon be convinced of this fact. He will perceive that a thousand objects came in to attract his attention from the subject of his sorrow, of which he was unconscious at the time, and to which he yielded without knowing it—that the mind has numberless sources of pleasure, to which, in its most gloomy hour, it soon spontane-

ously betakes itself, and that it is impossible to chain it down to perpetual afflictive thought. If he will carefully compare the number of minutes in which he is sure that his attention was fixed on the subject of his misfortune, with those in which he is satisfied that it was occupied with other objects, he will be so far from believing he contemplated it incessantly, that he will wonder he thought of it so little. At particular periods, indeed, he dwelt upon and felt all his wretchedness; these periods, perhaps are distinctly marked in his memory, but he has forgotten the hours of abstraction from his sorrow which intervened, and for the same reason that he has forgotten so many of his peaceful days. Now the bestowment of this constitution of mind is of the very essence of benevolence. Language cannot express the kindness there is in it, nor are we at all able to estimate the relief we owe to it from the afflictions which befall us.

Thus, then, it appears that pleasure not only preponderates over pain, but that this is often the case even in the most unhappy periods of existence. And in the ordinary circumstances of life, how great is that pleasure! how various, how exquisite, how far surpassing our ability to estimate! Contemplate a person placed in the ordinary circumstances of life; suppose him addicted to no particular vice, nor practising any exemplary virtue—neither highly favored with the gifts of understanding nor of fortune; of what pleasure is he capable, and what pleasure does he actually enjoy! What gratification does he every hour receive from his different senses—from the exercise of his intellectual faculties—from his social affections—from the relations which connect him with his fellow-beings, those rela-

tions so dear and sacred, which constitute him a father, a husband, a brother, a friend !

But suppose him not only addicted to no vice, but highly virtuous, to feel a deep sense of his obligations to the Supreme Being, to love him, to take a sincere pleasure in learning and obeying his laws, and in preparing to meet him in those blissful regions, where he will enjoy such superior displays of his perfections and glory ; suppose him to consider all his fellow-creatures as brethren, to feel for them a real and fraternal affection, and to delight in doing them all the good offices in his power ; in a word, suppose him to be a sincere disciple of Jesus Christ ; what exquisite felicity does such a being enjoy ! How sublime in its nature ! How immortal in its duration ! How nearly does it assimilate him to the Supreme Being himself ! Who can believe that such faculties and such happiness can be bounded by the current of time, or swept away amidst the low and frivolous objects which it is bearing to eternal oblivion—that they are imparted only to give dignity to the triumph of death, and importance to the spoil of the grave, and that the very benignity of their Author is questionable ?

There is yet another circumstance in the constitution of our nature, which proves both the benevolence of the principle on which it is constructed, and the preponderance of happiness actually experienced, namely, the pleasure afforded by retrospection and anticipation. The fact, that the recollection of the places we have visited, the persons we have seen, the companions with whom we have associated, the occupations in which we have engaged, and the general train of events which have befallen us, and which constitute the little history

of ourselves, is pleasurable, is seldom denied. And there are places, and persons, and periods—periods in some cases comprehending months and years—which we can never think of without extreme delight. Hence the magic there is in the name of country, home, and friend, and hence the pleasure, perhaps the most exquisite the mind ever tastes, with which it dwells on some bright and blissful moments of existence, or on some spots with the recollection of the objects of which are inseparably associated its own thoughts and emotions. Recollection, it is true, does not in general afford this acute and exquisite pleasure, but in general it does afford pleasure. But recollection is only the compound vestige of all the pleasures and pains which have been associated with the objects contemplated. If, therefore, recollection be upon the whole pleasurable, the balance must of necessity have been in favor of pleasure.

And the feeling with which we look forward to the future is for the most part not only pleasurable, but exhilarating. Hope is the balm of life. As many pains which once produced considerable sufferings are softened, and even converted into actual pleasures, so the fear which occasionally mingles with hope is seldom sufficient to deprive it of its charm. But in fact we live in the past and in the future. The pleasures and pains produced by present circumstances have very inconsiderable influence on present feeling; that feeling depends almost entirely on recollection and anticipation, and these faculties are made the sources of pleasure. There is nothing in the structure of the bodily frame more indicative of wisdom, than this mental constitution is demonstrative of goodness.

The constitution of our social nature, also, is such as to ensure the continual augmentation of happiness. We are made mutually dependent. It is an essential part of the plan of the Deity, that the highest happiness enjoyed by man should be communicated by man. But the happiness one person receives from another endears to him the author of his pleasure, and makes him wish to show to his benefactor the like kindness. If, on the other hand, a person be the occasion of misery to another, this not only checks any expressions of kindness, but puts the injured on thinking how he can prevent a repetition of the injury, and, by the infliction of positive pain, make the evil-doer feel that he cannot invade another's happiness without losing his own. Thus in a twofold manner self-love is rendered the instrument of increasing happiness. The operation of this principle must therefore be to augment benevolence without limits, to check malevolence in its origin, and ultimately to destroy it. It is not possible to conceive a more satisfactory evidence of the provision which the Creator has made, in the very frame of our nature, for our happiness. But it does more than this. It proves, in the clearest manner, the infinite benevolence of the Creator himself; for it renders benevolence inseparable from knowledge—it shows that benevolence must arise in all beings in proportion to their experience of good and evil, and their acquaintance with causes and effects. Hence it has been most justly argued, that benevolence arises as necessarily in an intelligent nature, as self-love does in a sensitive nature—that moral distinctions are founded in truth—that every being who perceives truth must perceive them—that the Deity, therefore, who perceives all truth, must perceive them in all their ex-

tent and obligation, and be more under their influence than any other being. But the chief of all moral distinctions is, that it is right to communicate happiness, and wrong to produce misery. This distinction, God, as intelligent, must perceive, and the perception of it is the same with the approbation of beneficence, and the disapprobation of its contrary. A stronger argument cannot exist. It shows that the principle of benevolence in the Deity is implied in his perception of the truth, and that it is just as certain that he is good, as it is that we say right when we say that happiness is better than misery. The nature of happiness is better than misery. The nature of happiness and misery being such, that a preference of one of them to the other must arise in every mind, in proportion to the degree in which they are known, it follows, with the plainest evidence, that the Supreme Intelligence must be original and supreme benevolence, or such a benevolence as nothing can turn aside, or deceive, or counteract.*

In a word, the Creator must either be benevolent or malevolent. Suppose him to be malevolent: suppose his design in creation to have been to produce misery; in this case, evil would have been the aim of nature in all its appointments, and good would have been, as evil is now, always the consequence, either of some regulation for producing general misery, or of some unnatural violence and perversion. All design in the frame of nature would have been cruel design, and all that wisdom of God, in his works, which we now admire and adore, we should have dreaded as a contrivance to extend distress, and cursed as an expedient to

* Dr. Price's Sermon, viii. Of the goodness of God, p. 269, &c.

render pain more pungent and permanent. The *ordinary* state of every being would have been, not a state of ease and enjoyment, but of trouble and anguish. "The lower animals, and all inanimate nature, instead of being made to minister to our delight and accommodation, would have been made to annoy and harass us. The bee would have been without his honey, and the rose without its fragrance. The fields would have wanted their cheerful green and gay flowers. The fire would have scorched without warming us. The light of day would have dazzled without cheering us. Every breath of air would have cut us like the point of a sword. The appetites and senses would have been the instruments of torture, and never of pleasure to us, except when turned out of their common course by incidental causes. Every touch would have felt like the rubbing of a wound. Every taste would have been a bitter, and every sound a scream. Our imaginations would have presented nothing but frightful spectres to us. Our thoughts would have been the seat of a deep and constant melancholy, and our reason would have served only to show us our wretchedness. What we now call gratification would have been nothing but a relaxation of torment, and we should have been driven to the offices necessary for self-preservation, by an increase of sufferings occasioned by neglecting them. Or, if at any time any feelings of delight were granted us, they would have been, as the paroxysms of pain are at present, transient and rare, and intended only to set a keener edge on misery, by giving a taste of its contrary.

"In the present state of the world, our pains, when they become extreme, soon make an end of either

themselves or us. But, in the state of things we are imagining, there could have been no such merciful appointment; for our bodies, probably, would have been so made as to be capable of bearing the severest pains, and at the same time we might have been deterred from self-violence, by knowing that the consequence of hastening death would be getting sooner into a state of misery still more dreadful, and which would never come to an end.”*

It is impossible to contrast our actual condition with that which is here imagined, without a deep and joyful feeling, that he who gave us life, and all things richly to enjoy, is a Being of infinite benevolence.

But, if he be really so, whence is misery? He is almighty, and therefore he can have been controlled by no superior power. He is absolute wisdom; to him are known the true natures of all things; he must therefore be perfectly benevolent. And because he is pure reason, he can have no tendencies opposed to benevolence; for reason cannot be the ground of approbation of beneficence, and at the same time of biases inconsistent with it. Whence, then, is evil? It is impossible, even while contemplating the most satisfactory evidence of the divine goodness, not to ask this question. To have a clear and just conception of the answer to it, is to be happy under almost all the events of life, and secure and resigned under its worst ills; and, though the true answer to it may be collected from what has been already advanced, yet this subject is of such unspeakable importance, that it demands a more particular consideration.

* Dr. Price's Sermon, p. 283.

SECTION II.

OF THE EVIL OF DEFECT, AND OF NATURAL AND MORAL EVIL.

THE origin of evil has occupied the attention of the most profound and pious minds, from the earliest periods of which we have any record, and the investigation of it still continues to exercise the highest faculties of the most intelligent and enlightened men. It must be confessed, that we do not comprehend it. Perhaps our present faculties are not capacious enough to take in that vast extent, and that various kind of knowledge, which are necessary to a full understanding of the subject. It is at least certain that we do not possess this knowledge, and probable that we shall never attain to it in the present state. Much, however, is known—sufficient to remove all reasonable doubt and apprehension, and to afford peace to the mind.

That this difficulty was perceived by the ancient philosophers, and by the primitive believers and defenders of the Christian religion, is certain, for it is stated by them in its full force. The supposed Maker of the world, it was long ago said, was either willing to abolish all evils, but not able, or was able and not willing, or he was neither willing nor able, or, lastly, he was both able and willing. This latter is the only thing that answers fully to the notion of a God. Now,

that the supposed Creator of all things was not thus both able and willing to abolish all evils, is plain, because then there would have been no evils at all left. Wherefore, since there is such a deluge of evils overflowing all, it must needs be that either he was willing and not able to remove them, and then he was *impotent*, or else he was able and not willing, and then he was envious, or, lastly, he was neither able nor willing, and then he was both impotent and envious.*

If, it was argued, there be but one Author of all things, the origin of all evil must be referred to him. But how can infinite goodness become the origin of evil? If God could not hinder it, he is not powerful; if he could and would not, he is not good. If it be said that evil necessarily adheres to some particular natures, since these too must owe their being to God, it would surely have been better not to have given them existence, than to have debased his workmanship with these concomitant evils.

A full and complete answer to these objections it is not in the power of the human faculties, with their present knowledge, perhaps with their present means of knowledge, to give; but an answer, sufficient to produce in the considerate and candid mind an undoubting conviction of the perfect benevolence of the Creator, can be rendered.

All the kinds of evil of which we can conceive may be comprehended under three, namely, the evil of imperfection, natural and moral evil.

* This is the famous objection of Epicurus, quoted and answered by Lactantius—*De Ira Dei*, sect. xii., p. 435. See also Cudworth's *True Intellectual System*, pp. 78, 79, and Dean Clarke's *Inquiry into the Cause and Origin of Evil*.

The evil of imperfection is the absence of perfection ; natural evil is pain produced by natural causes ; moral evil is pain produced by wrong volitions.

In regard to the evil of imperfection, it is impossible that it should have been avoided : it is the necessary property of created being. Omnipotence itself could not have removed it, because Omnipotence could not effect that which in the nature of things is impossible to be effected—could not produce a contradiction. But a creature possessed of absolute perfection is a contradiction ; for self-existence is essential to absolute perfection ; but a self-existent creature is a plain contradiction, since it supposes a creature to exist of itself, and not of itself at the same time. It is implied in the very notion of a creature, that it is dependent—dependent for its existence, and all its properties, on the Being who created it. However exalted may be the qualities imparted to it, it must always be inferior to its Creator ; an effect must be inferior to its cause. Absolute perfection, therefore, is peculiar to that Being who is self-existent and independent. Whatever powers and excellencies it may please him to communicate, it is impossible that he should communicate, in their original perfection, his own attributes. These are incommunicable. We cannot, indeed, but conceive of such a Being as almighty—that is, as able to do all that is possible to be done ; but to communicate his own attributes in their original perfection, *is* a thing impossible to be done, since to render a creature *self-existent*, or absolutely independent, implies a direct contradiction.

The evil of imperfection must, therefore, of necessity, exist, supposing there is a creation. It follows, that it

is not incompatible with almighty power and infinite goodness to produce imperfect creatures, or, rather, that it is not compatible with these attributes, that it is not possible in the nature of things, to produce perfect creatures. God might indeed have refrained from creating; and, had it been wiser and better to produce no creatures than imperfect creatures, he would have remained eternally alone, without witnesses and without participators of his happiness. But if there be a creation, there must be imperfection, and all the other evils necessarily resulting from this great and original evil are absolutely unavoidable.

Nor in strictness does this evil of imperfection arise from the Creator, but from the original nonentity of the creature. Every created thing was a negation or nonentity before it had a primitive being, and, when it had a primitive being communicated to it, it had just so much of its primitive negation taken away from it. So far as it is, its being is to be attributed to the Sovereign Cause that produced it; so far as it is not, its not being is to be attributed to the original nonentity out of which it was produced. That which was once nothing, would still have been nothing, had it not been for the cause that gave existence to it; and, therefore, that it is so far nothing still, that is, limited and defective, is only to be attributed to its own primitive nothingness.*

Of the second class of evil, namely, that which is termed natural, and which consists of pain produced by natural causes, it cannot in strictness be said that it is necessary and inevitable. The *tendency* of bodies to

* Scott's Christian Life, part ii., vol. 1., ch. vi., sect. ii., pp. 446, 447, 1st edition.

corruption and putrefaction, indeed, on which single law the most stupendous, and sometimes apparently the most disastrous consequences depend, could not in the nature of things have been avoided. All objects in nature are composed of matter. Matter without motion is useless. To be of any conceivable service, it must possess such motion as will separate it into solid and fluid parts, and retain those parts in a solid and fluid state. This cannot take place unless it be endowed with the properties of attraction and repulsion. We can form no conception of a solid body, without supposing the particles of which it is composed to possess such an attraction for each other as to cause them to cohere, nor of an aëriform fluid, without supposing its particles to be mutually repulsive. But the motions produced by attraction and repulsion must of necessity be contrary to each other. Contrariety of motion cannot be separated from the operation of these great principles, even in idea. Contrariety of motion produces separation of parts, overcomes the power of cohesion, disunites the principles of which a compound body is composed, and resolves it into its simple elements. This is dissolution, or corruption. The simple elements thus disengaged, in obedience to the laws of attraction operating differently under different circumstances, enter into new combinations, and form new substances. This is reproduction. While all that is great, and fair, and good, in the natural world, depends upon these processes, all that is evil also derives its origin from the same source. Thus the tendency to the production of evil is inseparably connected with the necessary motion of matter; but it does not therefore follow, that evil must exist. There is a

wide difference between the tendency to the production of evil, and the actual production of it. It might be strictly impossible even for infinite power and wisdom to prevent the liability to evil, while an effectual and sure provision might be made against the actual existence of it. A tendency to evil, not in the nature of things to be avoided, might be counteracted with absolute certainty, and forever, either by a modification of the laws of motion, or by rendering some motions corrective of others; because all natural evil is the consequence, either of some property imparted to matter, or of some law to which matter endowed with certain properties is subjected. Any evil produced by any property or law might have been prevented by changing the property or modifying the law, or by making some other property or law counteract the operation of the one in question.

The disunion of bodies, and the formation of new compounds—that is, their continual transition, through the processes of dissolution and recomposition—do not comprehend the whole class of natural evils. Pain of body, uneasiness of mind, ungratified appetite, and death, must be included in this number. These can by no means be considered as evils which are absolutely inseparable from material beings, because man in a state of innocence was without them—and they will not annoy the happiness of the celestial world. The relative circumstances of beings might have been so ordered, as perfectly to exclude them. Their existence, therefore, cannot, like the evil of defect, be referred to the unalterable natures of things. In whatever degree they exist, they exist by the will and appointment of the Creator. Even with our imperfect

knowledge, we can clearly perceive how he might prevent them. Why, then, does he not prevent them?

It is self-evident, that the answer to this question must be totally different from the answer to the question, Why has he not made all things absolutely perfect? Absolute perfection it is out of the power of Omnipotence itself to communicate, because absolute perfection in a creature is a contradiction in terms. But pain of body, uneasiness of mind, disappointment of appetite, death, the separation and corruption of the parts of any and of all sensitive creatures, it is in his power to prevent at all times in a perfect measure.

Why, then, has he not prevented them? Because they are necessary to his plan. They are the instruments he has chosen to accomplish the wise and beneficent purposes of his creation. They are as much a part of benevolence, and as real an evidence of it, as the most exquisite pleasures he has communicated, because they are agents by the operation of which he perceived that he could produce the largest amount of happiness. It is of the utmost importance that the mind should have a clear perception of this truth, and an undoubting conviction of it.

When the Deity determined on the work of creation, we may suppose that all possible systems were present to his mind. All which infinite power and wisdom could effect, in the production of happiness, must have been known to him, because his knowledge is absolute and perfect. This amount of happiness he must have determined to produce, because, since he could have engaged in this work only to communicate happiness, it is inconceivable that he should have chosen the lesser

in preference to the greater good. It has been shown that he could not communicate absolute perfection to any creature. That degree of perfection, which his infinite wisdom perceived to be the highest that it would, upon the whole, be best to impart, he communicated,* and to as great a number of intelligences as

* It seems to be a more proper mode of speaking, to say that the Creator was determined by his infinite wisdom and goodness in the choice of the system he has adopted, than to resolve it into his mere pleasure; although, if we can conceive two systems possible, each equally good, each equally present to the divine contemplation, and than which there could be no better, we must suppose that the Deity possesses what is termed the liberty of indifference—that is, the power of choosing out of equal objects; otherwise, in such a case he must either not have acted at all, or have chosen a system of inferior excellence. Some philosophers, indeed, deny the possibility of the existence of two things perfectly equal, and consequently affirm that God could not have made a different universe in all respects as excellent as that which actually exists. If they are in the right, there is no need of supposing even in the Deity such a power as that of choosing out of equal objects; for, wherever there is a real difference in objects, God must choose that which is best; that is, he must be limited by his wisdom and goodness to such a choice. But there seems no ground for affirming that the power of choosing out of equal objects is in itself impossible; and if other systems, as worthy of the Divine attributes as the present, were possible, God must have possessed and have exercised this power. The language of Dr. Hartley on this subject, is in his own excellent spirit:—"If it be said that God might have made a different universe, equally perfect with that which now exists, and that his freedom consists in this, the answer seems to be, that we are entirely lost here in the infinities, &c., *ad infinitum*, which always have existed, and always will exist, with respect to kind, degree, and every possible mode of existence. One cannot in the least presume either to deny or affirm this kind of freedom of God, since the absolute perfection of God seems to imply both entire uniformity and infinite variety in his works. We can here only submit, and refer all to God's infinite

possible; possible, that is, in consistency with the greatest sum of happiness. These creatures, occupying the first rank in the creation, he endowed with certain natures and attributes; but, the universe being as full of these as possible, there might still be room for others of different natures and different attributes. These latter might not at all interfere with the former. Inferior they must be; but though inferior, they might still possess a high degree of excellence, and enjoy an incalculable amount of happiness. Their imperfection could not possibly detract from the enjoyment of the higher order, but only in a certain measure from their own; and, after the necessary allowance is made for this, there might be left a vast balance of excellence and happiness. Now that balance, to whatever it amount, is obviously just so much excellence and happiness produced in the creation, which could not have been produced had the higher order only existed; that is, had not the degree of imperfection necessarily attached to the inferior order been permitted. When,

knowledge and perfection." Note C, in King's *Origin of Evil*, p. 53, 5th edition, and note (52,) pp. 253, 254. Belsham's *Elements of the Philosophy of Mind*, chap. ix., sect. iv., p. 252. Hartley on *Man*, vol. ii., p. 36. If the power of choosing where motives are perfectly equal, be a perfection of the Supreme Being, there seems nothing impossible in the supposition that it might be communicated to his intelligent creatures. But then there is no evidence whatever for supposing that it actually is communicated, at least to man. Indeed, the increasing difficulty of determining the choice, in proportion to the apparent approximation of motives to equality, renders it highly probable that this power is not an attribute of the human mind. Nor can it ever be proved that a choice has in any instance been actually made, where the motives have been exactly balanced.—*Belsham's Elements of the Philosophy of the Mind*, p. 299.

again, we suppose the universe to be as full as possible of creatures in the second rank, we can imagine a third order, still inferior to the second, and so constituted as not at all to interfere with it; then we can conceive of a fourth, subordinate to the third, and a lower still, and yet a lower. According to this supposition, there is a scale of being, at the top of which is the Great First Cause of all. Between him and the highest created intelligence, there is an infinite distance; but from the highest order of creatures, a gradation to the bottom of the scale, which is nothing, or non-existence—every intermediate degree being full—full of creatures, happy according to their several powers and capacities—all subserving the most important ends to themselves and the system, and the higher orders never interfering with the lower, nor the lower with the higher. In relation to subjects so much above our present knowledge and capacity, it becomes us to think and speak with the greatest diffidence and humility; but there is something so reasonable and beautiful in this conception, and it leads us to form such exalted apprehensions of the wisdom and goodness of the Creator, that we can scarcely be wrong in cherishing it.

If this representation be just, there can be no question, that creation is a most benevolent and glorious work—that it is consistent with perfect goodness to give being to imperfect creatures, that it is equally consistent with it to place creatures in different ranks, and to communicate to some higher degrees of perfection than to others, since by this means the sum of happiness is immeasurably increased. Hence, too, we perceive the true answer to all such questions as these—Why are not creatures made higher and better? Why

are there not more? Why is not such an order of beings endowed with such and such faculties and perfections? Why is it subject to such evils? The universe is as full of creatures as it can be; creatures are endowed with as high degrees of perfection as is possible; as many of the highest exist as can exist. Creatures of a certain order are not endowed with such and such faculties and perfections, because, if they were, they would no longer be creatures of that order; and all other orders are full. To whatever imperfections and evils they are subject, they have reason to adore the boundless goodness of their Author, for it is because his goodness is boundless, that he chose rather to give them existence with these evils, together with a vast preponderance of happiness, than no existence at all.

Inseparably connected with this view of the creation, is the opinion, that creatures are continually advancing from one degree of knowledge, perfection, and happiness, to another, without ever coming to a period. It is possible that there are beings placed in an unalterable condition; formed at first with all the perfection of which their natures are capable. Such an order of beings may be second only to the Deity in excellence and glory, and occupy the top of the scale of the creation. We can imagine such an order, and if its existence be really wise and good, without doubt it does exist; but we know so little even of ourselves and of our own world, and are so entirely ignorant of all others, that while pursuing such speculations, we cannot be too cautious and diffident. But, as far as we are capable of judging, it seems probable that there is no such order—that no being is fixed in an unalterable condition

in the highest possible degree of perfection; for we cannot well conceive of such degree, since that which admits of continual addition can have no highest. According to our best conceptions, it seems more reasonable to believe that the highest order of beings, at whatever point they commenced their career, are constantly advancing, and will continue to advance forever. And though their progress be inconceivably rapid, and continue through all the ages of eternity, they can never come to a period, because there must always be an infinite distance between them and the Creator. These conceptions open to our view a prospect of stupendous magnificence and glory. There is nothing in religion more beautiful and triumphant. Conceive of various orders of creatures, thus going on from strength to strength, thus forever gaining new accessions, and brightening to all eternity, through everlasting ages, adding knowledge to knowledge and excellence to excellence; what can be more glorious? Surely, "it must be a prospect pleasing to God himself, to see his creation thus forever beautifying in his eyes, and drawing nearer to him by degrees of resemblance."*

But we need not stop even here, in the justification of the wisdom and goodness of the Deity, in creating beings of different orders, and endowing them with different degrees of perfections; for it can be proved, that the very evils which prevail among the inferior orders are rendered subservient to their own well-being, and to that of the system. If this can be shown, if the benevolent operation of evil can be established, and if this be connected, as it ought to be connected, with

* Spectator, No. iii.

the truth, that all reasonable beings, however inferior the condition in which they commence their existence, are destined to rise higher and higher, in endless progression, and to contribute to their own advancement, the proof of the infinite benignity of the Creator must be admitted to be complete.

That evil, under the superintendence of infinite wisdom and benignity, is the means of producing ultimate good, has already been proved.* In addition to the evidence which has been adduced of this most important truth, the following considerations deserve great attention.

All natural evils are reducible to one, namely, pain. There is nothing in the nature and motion of matter, nothing in any actual or possible result of these, which is considered evil, that is not so denominated, only because its ultimate effect is to produce in the sensitive creation uneasy sensations, that is, pain. But there is no pain which has not for its object the production of good. There is no motion of matter which produces pain to an animal, unless that motion tend to its destruction, and the pain occasioned by the injuring cause serves to prevent the injury. In proportion, therefore, as the preservation of the being is a good, this pain is a good.

Pain is nothing but a sense, that some part of the animal frame is perishing, or is in danger of perishing. Those motions which are conducive to the health, vigor, and preservation of an animal, are pleasurable. There is no exception to this in the whole animal economy. Those motions which tend to its destruc

* Part i., sect. iii., p. 54, et seq.

tion are painful. Now, since the animal is thus warned against what is injurious, and instructed what to avoid, the benevolence displayed in this constitution is so much the more perfect, inasmuch as it is the effect of consummate wisdom. If we were not thus warned of danger, if the motions of external bodies, and the deranged action of our own organs, did not thus apprize us of their presence, and lead us to take precaution against their injurious operation, we could scarcely move a single step, or suffer the least illness, without perishing; and our destruction, whenever it came, must always be sudden, and without the slightest notice.

Nor could anything excepting pain answer the purpose. A mere knowledge of the presence or approach of danger would not be sufficient. Knowledge is easily disregarded, but pain is a visitant that will not be slighted. It will make itself attended to. Men often do know that danger is nigh; but this knowledge is so far from inducing them to avoid it, that it seems only to make them court it. And this occurs so frequently, and respecting dangers so likely to be fatal, as to afford abundant proof, that, were our preservation left to mere knowledge, there is no business or pleasure which might not deprive us of existence. And it ought never to be forgotten, that, whenever the pain of life upon the whole exceeds its pleasure, pain and life generally cease together; that is, when existence can no longer afford pleasure, it is brought to a close. This is exactly what might have been expected of perfect benevolence. The Creator produced all things out of nothing, and of his own pleasure gave existence to all that live. In justice, therefore, he seems obliged

to render the existence of every creature a good, the whole of its being considered. It is not consistent with benevolence, to suffer the condition of any creature to be, upon the whole, worse than non-existence. The balance of happiness is and must be in favor of every sentient being. Within this limit, the Creator may render the condition of any creature whatever he pleases; that is, whatever the greatest happiness of the system may require. At first sight, indeed, it seems as if the communication of a certain degree of happiness, without any admixture of pain, were more consistent with perfect benevolence than a mere balance of happiness. But this is altogether unreasonable. If a creature possesses four degrees of happiness and one of pain, it is not only a gainer by existence, but it gains more than it would do, were it to enjoy only one degree of pure pleasure.

Upon the whole, then, it is evident that all natural evils are not only consistent with infinite wisdom and perfect benevolence, but are as much proofs of these attributes, as the purest pleasure of the most exalted intelligence.

And the same, without doubt, is true of moral evil. By moral evil is meant that pain which is occasioned by wrong volitions. There are pains which result from the constitution of the material world, and the operation of the laws of nature—that is, from natural causes; these are natural evils. Moral evils are the very same with volition superadded. Moral evil, then, is dependent upon natural. A thing is morally evil which produces, or tends to produce, natural evil; and it is morally evil only because, and in so far as it produces, or tends to produce, natural evil.

All evil is pain. But some pains arise from natural causes, without our consent, often without our knowledge; and these, as we have said, are natural evils. Others are the consequence of a wrong volition, and these are termed moral evils. The difference between natural and moral evil, therefore, is not in their natures, but in their causes. Their natures are the very same, namely, pain, inconvenience, injury to ourselves or others. In this precisely, and in this alone, consists the evil of both; but the ill effects of the one proceed from volition—those of the other from natural causes; and hence moral evil is justly and precisely said to be natural evil, with volition superadded.

Since, then, moral evil is thus dependent on natural evil—since there is nothing wrong in any volition which does not lead to natural evil, it is obvious, that natural evil is worse than moral evil; for that which makes a thing bad must of necessity possess a more evil nature than that which it renders bad. How unreasonable, then, is that reluctance which is felt to refer moral evil to the Deity! All writers boldly trace natural evil to the appointment of the great First Cause of all things, but they hesitate to ascribe to him the appointment of moral evil. They feel no reluctance to trace to him the greater, but they shrink with a kind of horror from ascribing to him the lesser evil. Without doubt, he causes both, but he does not cause moral evil any more than natural evil as evil; he does not rest in it as an ultimate object; he produces it for the sake of the greater good of which it is the instrument. And in causing it with this end, he does not really produce evil, but the greater ultimate good.*

* “God does not will sin as sin, or for the sake of anything evil,

That the existence of moral evil must be referred to the will of the Deity, is acknowledged by the author quoted below. "I believe," he says, "there is no person of good understanding, who will venture to say he is certain that it is impossible it should be best, taking the whole compass and extent of existence, and all consequences in the endless series of events, that there should be such a thing as moral evil in the world. And if so it will certainly follow, that an infinitely wise Being, who always chooses what is best, must choose that there be such a thing.*

Whether the will be invariably determined by motive, and cannot possibly choose otherwise than it does, all the previous circumstances remaining the same—or whether it be a self-moving power, capable "of choosing or not choosing in any given case, naturally independent of any mediate or immediate, external or internal force, compulsion, influence, or necessity, and physically determined neither by bodily sensations, appetites, &c., nor mental perceptions, reason, nor judgment;"† in a word, a proper self-determining power, capable "of choosing with a motive, contrary to a motive, or without any motive at all;"‡ in either case, the existence of moral evil must alike be traced to God. According to the former hypothesis, from that constitution of things of which the great First

though it be his pleasure so to order things, that, he permitting, sin will come to pass, *for the sake of the great good that, by his disposal, shall be the consequence.*"—*Edwards on the Will*, part iv., sect. ix., p. 371, 3d edition.

* *Ibid.*, pp. 369, 370.

† Note 58, by the Bishop of Carlisle, in *King's Origin of Evil*, p. 290, 5th edition.

‡ Dr. James Gregory's *Philosophical Essays*, sect. i., p. 3.

Cause is the author, arise certain appearances, those appearances cause certain perceptions, these perceptions form a judgment, this judgment determines the will, and this will produces action. That action, therefore, the fixed, certain, and intended result of all the preceding causes, must be referred to the appointment of the First Cause. According to the latter hypothesis, free will, a self moving, self-determining power, was bestowed upon man by the Creator. The nature of this faculty, and all the effects of which it would be the agent, he perfectly knew. He made the faculty what it is, and communicated it to man such as it is, with a perfect foreknowledge, that man would certainly so use it as to produce moral evil. This is distinctly admitted by the best writers on this subject. Moral evil, they grant, is the effect of wrong volition; but the only true and proper cause of volition and action, they contend, is free will, this self-moving power, and the only cause of this "is the Creator who communicated it."* If, therefore, there be any truth in the maxim, that the cause of the cause, is the cause of the thing caused,† it follows, inevitably, that God is the author of moral evil, in as much as he is the sole cause of that which he certainly knew would be the cause of it. Hence, according of the doctrine of free will, as much as according to the doctrine of necessity, the Deity is the cause of moral evil, in as real and strict a sense as he is of natural evil. In truth, he is alike the cause of both, and he has appointed both for the same wise and benevolent reason, namely, because he

* King's Origin of Evil.

† Quod est causa causæ, est etiam causa causati.

saw that they would produce the greatest sum of good.*

*That this is the actual effect of moral evil, and that it was appointed by God for this purpose, is not only admitted, but contended for, by Edwards. He maintains that God may hate a thing considered simply as evil, and yet may will that it should come to pass, considering all consequences—that, taking in the whole extent and compass of existence, and all causes in the series of events, it is best that moral evil should exist—that, therefore, God, who is infinitely wise, and always chooses what is best, must choose it; yet that he does not choose it for the sake of evil, but “for the sake of the great good that by his disposal shall be the consequence.”—*Edwards on the Will*, p. 371. Again he says, “’Tis not of a bad tendency for the Supreme Being thus to order and permit that moral evil to be which it is best should come to pass; for that it is of good tendency, is the very thing supposed in the point now in question.”—*Ibid.*, p. 375. And again, “Nor is there any need of supposing it (moral evil) proceeds from any evil dispositions or aim; for by the supposition, what is aimed at is good, and good is the actual issue in the final result of things.”—*Ibid.*, p. 376.

These quotations ought to have been inserted at p. 65, at the end of the proof, that evil is the means of producing good. They establish, beyond doubt, the fact, that the position there contended for was believed by this writer, and that he asserts and defends it in that very work, the study of which the Eclectic Reviewer so earnestly recommends, and which he considers as so decisive an authority. The Review says, “The argument *à priori* in favor of the doctrine of Universal Restoration, is not only specious, but satisfactory, if the one thing which requires to be proved is taken for granted—if it be allowed that evil is a branch of the divine contrivance, for the production of a higher ultimate good to the creature.” If, then, there be any truth or authority in the opinion of Jonathan Edwards, this doctrine must be admitted to be established. The passages already cited are in Edwards’ own words, but he quotes with approbation the following passages from the work of an American author: “If the Author and Governor of all things be infinitely *perfect*, then whatever is, is *right*; of all possible systems he has chosen the *best*, and consequently there is *no absolute evil*

Though natural evil is so obviously, in some cases, the means of producing a preponderance of good, and though we have the fullest assurance, from the best established analogy, that it is so in all, yet, on account of our total ignorance of many parts of nature, and our inability to comprehend the great whole, there are numerous instances in which we cannot see how it will have this issue.

Of the moral world we are still more ignorant. Mind, its operations, the laws by which it is governed, its relation to other minds, and to the great Eternal Mind, its volitions, and the actions that depend upon its volitions—in a word, the whole of this vast system, appears to us much more obscure and complicated even than the relations of physical objects to each other and the manner in which each promotes the order and harmony of the whole. That we should find a still greater difficulty in explaining how a preponderance of good should be the result of the prevalence of moral evil, is

in the universe. If we own the existence of evil in the world in an *absolute* sense, we diametrically contradict what has been just now proved of God. He intends and pursues the universal *good* of his creation; and the *evil* which happens is not permitted for its own sake, or through any pleasure in evil, but because it is requisite to the *greater good* pursued." The words in italics are so printed in Edwards.—*Freedom of the Will*, pp. 370, 371. These passages are quoted from Turnbull's Principles of Moral Philosophy.

Thus Jonathan Edwards affirms that "there is no absolute evil in the universe:" the Eclectic Reviewer, on the contrary, maintains that "there is no proposition more indispensable to the existence of true religion, considered as a habit of the mind, than that evil is essential and ultimately evil." The opinion of this writer is therefore in direct opposition to that of Jonathan Edwards, while the great and fundamental principles contended for in the *Freedom of the Will*, and in the *Divine Government*, is precisely the same.

therefore to be expected ; but, whatever difficulty we may have in explaining the manner of the fact, of the fact itself we cannot doubt. For it has been shown that moral evil is evil only as it is the cause of natural evil—that, were moral evil without any tendency to produce natural evil, it would be no longer moral evil—it would be no longer evil of any kind. Since, then, natural evil is universally acknowledged to be the means of producing good, moral evil must of necessity be so, because it contains no evil but natural, all the evil it contains being identical with natural evil. Whatever perplexity, therefore, may be occasioned, by the contemplation of any particular instance of moral evil, of all the relations of which we are ignorant, this single consideration would seem to be sufficient to set the mind at rest on this difficult and most important subject.

But in point of fact, we have the like proof from experience, that moral evil is the means of producing good, that we have of the beneficial operation of natural evil. If there be one individual, the disposition of whose mind, and the conduct of whose life, have been improved by the moral evils into which he has fallen, this proof is established. There is no more reason in the nature of the thing, why the temporary prevalence of vice may not lead to the advancement and exaltation of virtue, than why the temporary derangement of the functions of a corporeal organ may not excite actions within it which shall ultimately produce a more firm and vigorous health. We know, by experience, that the latter is often the case, and experience gives us the same assurance that the former is so. How many persons have been taught by the seductions of

sin, with a strength of feeling which no other means could have excited, the sweetness and loveliness of goodness! How many have been induced to attach themselves to virtue, with an ardor and devotedness which could not have existed, had they not experienced the meanness and odiousness of vice! How deep a sense, how affecting an impression of piety, has sometimes immediately succeeded some blamable neglect of its duties, or forgetfulness of its spirit! How many thousands have been taught the enormity, and saved from the commission of great crimes, by the stings of remorse, produced by the consciousness of lesser guilt! These and many similar examples, are indications that moral evil is a most active and beneficent agent in forming and perfecting the moral character; they afford good reason to believe that it will be the means, through every future period of its existence, of rendering the human being holier and happier. Although at present its agency is thus *obviously* beneficial only in a few individuals, yet the present is the first state of discipline in which the evildoer has been placed, and there is an eternity before him, and all the various means which absolute wisdom and unbounded power can bring to operate upon him.

The examples to which allusion has been made establish the fact, that the operation of moral evil is beneficial to the moral delinquent. One such example is sufficient to prove the truth of the principle; and, the principle once established, the great difficulty which seems to attach to the divine government is removed. All instances appearing to lead to an opposite conclusion, from our not knowing how they will terminate in producing a preponderance of good, are merely ar-

guments from our ignorance. However numerous or perplexing, they afford not the slightest evidence in contradiction to a principle established by positive proof. They are mere appearances—appearances as likely to be false as real. It is as conceivable that they may be in perfect accordance with this principle, as in contradiction to it. Of this principle, in the mean time, there is certain evidence, and this evidence cannot of course be affected by appearances which may as reasonably be supposed to be in harmony with it as in opposition to it.

It is universally acknowledged, that moral evil is essential to the existence of some virtues. Forbearance, forgiveness, clemency, generosity, resistance to temptation, devotedness to the reformation of vice—all these necessarily imply the prevalence of moral evil. Moral evil, then, constitutes an essential part of that discipline to which we are indebted for the formation and vigor of the highest excellencies. This is a separate and a decisive proof of the beneficial operation of moral evil in general, and it is a presumptive proof, that it will be ultimately beneficial in every instance.

We can conceive that beings of a higher order might have needed no experience of vice, to teach them the beauty and excellence of virtue—that they might have been made sensible of the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of the Deity, by being rendered perfectly happy in him and in each other; but it does not seem possible for such imperfect creatures as we are, to have attained to this knowledge and felicity without some previous admixture of suffering. By no other means could we have had so deep a sense of the mercy of our heavenly Father, of his forgiveness, of his infinite

goodness in providing the means of escaping from the consequences of sin, and in holding out to us so glorious a reward for our sincere endeavors to prepare ourselves for pure and unmixed happiness. By the memory of our former imperfections and sufferings, by the power of contrast, or, perhaps, by means inseparably connected with what we now are, though we cannot trace the connection, or by other methods which we cannot at present comprehend, he may make us, through every future period of our being, unspeakably better and happier for what we endure, than we could otherwise have been. He has infinite compensations in his power; and if our infirmities and pains are necessary to our own well-being, and to the order and harmony of the system, to have withheld them would not have been benevolence, but the want of it.

Upon the whole, then, if some degree of evil, both natural and moral, be indispensable—if this evil be made the means of producing a preponderance of good, and if the compensation thus afforded for its temporary prevalence, extending through eternity, be absolutely without limit, the perfect benevolence of the Deity must be admitted to be established. And it cannot but afford the contemplative and virtuous mind the highest satisfaction, to know that the actual amount of moral evil is extremely small, compared with what is commonly apprehended. For one crime there are many virtues; for one act of cruelty there are ten of kindness; for one offence, destructive to the happiness of individuals and of society, there are a thousand innocent, peaceful, and generous transactions. The worst characters are often acquired by one or two evil actions; and if the deeds of any one day, in the life of any bad

man, however devoted to wickedness, be examined, there will be found ten that are useful, or at least innoxious, for one that is positively injurious. A single instance of theft, violence, or murder, fills a whole neighborhood with consternation, and oftentimes forms the topic of conversation for weeks or months; but no one thinks of noticing the thousands and thousands of innocent, peaceful, honest, and benevolent actions which are performed every day. The reason is, that the latter are the common and ordinary events of life—the former its rare occurrences. One evil action may deprive a person or many persons of existence; but no life can have been reared and protected to maturity or adolescence, without the exercise of more charities, of more truly humane, and virtuous, and often-repeated sympathies, than it is possible to number.

Nothing can be unjust, if it be not unjust in the great question concerning moral evil to overlook its real tendency and its actual amount.

SECTION III.

OF THE EVILS OF THE SOCIAL STATE, AND ESPECIALLY
OF THE EVILS WHICH ARE ALLEGED TO RESULT
FROM THE PRINCIPLE OF POPULATION.

THERE is another class of evil, which, though it is really of the same nature as moral evil, and is only a particular modification of it, yet deserves a separate consideration, because it is under this form that the most frequent and calamitous examples of moral evil occur. It is not wonderful that the evils which have hitherto been found inseparable from the social state should have excited the most deep and abiding doubts of the perfect goodness of the Creator, because they are constantly forced on our observation; they are subject to peculiar occasional aggravations; and they are at all times unequal in their distribution. But a calm investigation of their nature, their amount, their mitigations, and their tendency, will satisfy the mind, that their appointment is consistent with perfect benevolence.

The chief evils of the social state are poverty, dependence, and servitude. The vice and misery to which these evils at all times give rise, and the mental and moral degradation and wretchedness which they sometimes produce, are so extreme, that, in the contemplation of them, and especially while suffering under them, it may too often, with truth, be said, that

“Reason stands aghast, and Faith herself is half confounded.” It does indeed require a most clear and comprehensive knowledge of the principles and ends of the divine government, to think and feel aright amidst the sorrows and the crimes of life.

These evils, terrible as they are, it does not seem possible for infinite wisdom and benevolence wholly to have avoided. For, to beings constituted as men are constituted, possessing only a limited understanding, having mutual intercourse, and standing in need of each other's assistance, to promote the common good, some kind of government is indispensable. But it is impossible to administer the affairs of the community without a delegation of the power to some one, or to some few, to determine the measures to be pursued for the common good. Those entrusted with this power must be in better circumstances than those whose duty it is to obey; that is, they may, with greater certainty and ease, and in more cases, obtain their ends, effect their choice, and accomplish their desires.* By greater talents, or greater industry, or better health, or better opportunities, or more favorable conjunctures, some must become more wealthy than others, while, from a want of talents, of industry, of health, or of opportunities, some must be reduced to poverty, and hence the other great evils of the social state, dependence and servitude, must inevitably follow.

A state of perfect equality is indeed conceivable, and perhaps possible, in which all men might live to-

* Note G, by the Bishop of Carlisle, in King's Origin of Evil, p. 116.

gether in ease and plenty, sharing alike the bounties of nature. This is a speculation in which some of the wisest and best men have delighted to indulge; for, in the realization of this captivating vision, they have anticipated, not only a vast addition to the sum of positive enjoyment, but a total absence of all the evils peculiar to the social state, and without doubt, in a society thus constituted, the absence of poverty, dependence, and servitude, might be secured; but it is questionable whether the sum of enjoyment would be increased, and whether the disadvantages of such a change would not overbalance the advantages. For, in a state of equal and universal plenty, ease, and happiness, what is there that could afford that stimulus to exertion, which is essential to the development of the noblest faculties of our nature? All observations, all experience, all history, whether extending back to the earliest periods of which we have any record of our race, or embracing any intermediate period down to the present, whether relating to savage or to civilized society, prove that man, in all countries, in all climates, under all institutions, in fact, under every variety of circumstance hitherto known, sinks into a state of indolence, when not excited to action by some powerful stimulus. And that a state of indolence is a state in which the human faculties not only could not be improved, but could not even be unfolded, has never been called in question.

A provision for this stimulus was therefore indispensable, and by the existing structure of society it is afforded. Its effect is to place every individual in circumstances which force him to exertion. Either for himself, or for those dear to him as himself—either by

the direct pressure of want, or by the fear of want—either to maintain himself in the situation in which he is placed by birth, or to raise himself to a higher rank, every one is compelled to the cultivation and exercise of his powers. No one can be idle. In a world which will produce nothing without culture—in a state of society in which the consumers are constantly, however slowly, increasing, every one who partakes of the supply actually raised must contribute to its replenishing. The difficulty, yet the absolute necessity, of procuring food, puts all the faculties of the mind on the stretch, to invent expedients for increasing its quantity, and for abridging the labor necessary to raise it. Hence arts are cultivated, and hence, in the progress of society, of which this activity is the efficient cause, and in the division of property and the distinction of ranks, which wonderfully increase this activity, and render it indispensable, leisure is afforded to some for the pursuits of science; so that, while the productions of the arts, which embellish life, and add to its happiness in a degree of which it is not possible that we can adequately judge, are multiplied, the mind is further expanded, and the faculties strengthened, and the manners softened, and the heart meliorated by philosophy and literature.

There is not, indeed, among the inestimable blessings of civilization, a single good, for which man is not indebted, directly or remotely, to this stimulus, and which may not be traced either to the hope of bettering his condition, or the fear of making it worse, or to some habit of mental or corporeal exertion, induced by that hope of rising, or that fear of falling, which any structure of society at all resembling the present,

must ever supply, and ever render vigorous. Put an end to that stimulus, and you put an end at once to all the projects of the head, and all the labors of the hand; you not only render advancement impossible, but retrogression inevitable; you reduce the world to a waste, and you exchange the refined and dignified pleasures of society for the wretchedness of the naked savage.

Any change, therefore, with whatever advantages it might otherwise be attended, which should take away this essential stimulus, must be fatal to man's highest happiness.

Moreover, if it be the Creator's design, (and that it is, reason and revelation alike declare,) by the circumstances of the present state, to form and to prove our character, to prepare us for future happiness, and to make our own exertions in a great measure the means of securing it, nothing can be conceived better adapted to accomplish this purpose, than a state of society so constructed as to admit of poverty, dependence, and servitude. For, while such a constitution of society is admirably calculated to produce and foster the highest excellencies of which our nature is capable, no concomitant evils, however calamitous, can reasonably disturb our minds, because they are only temporary; their existence is limited—ours is without end; they exist for a time, but it is for the sole purpose of making us blessed throughout eternity. In what way some particular combinations of these evils will ultimately contribute to the excellence of our character, and the augmentation of our happiness, we do not know; but we know that they will do so, and that they exist for no other purpose. And if this be the truth—if we are really endowed with an improvable nature—if we

are placed in circumstances which must necessarily call forth and invigorate our faculties—if, though weak, ignorant, and suffering, in this, the commencement of our career, we be indeed destined to an everlasting progress in knowledge, virtue, and happiness—if all the evils to which we are now subject are intended to be, and actually are, the means of securing and promoting that progress—if the present be but the first stage of our great journey—if we shall soon enter on another state, in which all that seems disordered now will then appear harmonious, because designs which are only commenced here will there be carried on and perfected—in a word, if there be reserved for us an immortality of unmixed, universal, and ever-enduring enjoyment, the benevolence of the Creator, in giving us existence, and placing us in our present circumstances, is not only not questionable, but is perfect and infinite; and to argue that it is questionable, on account of the partial and temporary prevalence of these evils, is as rash and foolish as it would be, on observing a complicated piece of machinery, in which were seen numerous wheels, some working in opposite directions, and apparently counteracting the movements of others, to say that the master-spring, by which all is kept in motion, produces nothing but confusion, *without attending to the result of the whole*—a result, perhaps, simple and beautiful.

Whatever, therefore, be the amount of the evils which prevail in that part of the system which we at present see, this account of their purpose and operation is sufficient to make the system itself appear, as indeed it is, perfectly harmonious and infinitely good.

Nor can it with the least justice be objected, that, even allowing to these evils the purpose which is here

assigned, they are greater than is necessary; because, if the principle be admitted on which the preceding reasoning is founded, that is all which can be required. He is as ill-instructed in philosophy, as he is in the proper office of human reason, who supposes that, with its present knowledge, it can determine, not only the exact means, but the exact measure and proportion of the means by which it is fit that the Creator should accomplish the purposes of his creation.

Nor can it be doubted, that both the number and magnitude of the evils of the social state, are in general exceedingly overrated. Often there is no real evil where much is apprehended; and, where evil does exist, it is generally accompanied with many mitigations.

Were the accommodations of the affluent universal, the evils of the social state would, in the general estimation, almost cease to exist; for of the condition of the rich no complaint is made, the general conviction being, that their sources of happiness are certain and abundant; but the question which constantly forces itself on the mind is, Why is the allotment of good so unequal? Why are the rich blessed with everything that can gratify the taste and refine the mind, and the poor "deprived of almost every accommodation that can render life tolerable or secure?"

The answer is, that in general the allotment of good is not unequal, and that, in the few cases in which it is unequal, alleviations are afforded, which render the very existence of the evils complained of at least questionable. He can have looked into human life but seldom, and never with attention, who has not found the fact often forced upon his observation, that happi-

ness is much more equally distributed, than a survey of the external circumstances of society would render probable.

The advantages of the rich over the poor, to which the mind most readily adverts, and which appear at first sight extremely great, are exemption from labor, and superior accommodations.

Exemption from labor is so far from giving the rich any real advantage over the poor, that the want of fixed, regular employment is one of the very means by which the actual enjoyment of the former is brought down to a level with that of the latter. Occupation is essential to human happiness. The real enjoyment of the man who rises every day with a certain portion of work to accomplish, provided it be not oppressive to the strength or the faculties, is as much greater than the happiness of him who is without occupation, as the apparent accommodations of the prince are superior to those of the peasant. Nothing is more common than complaints of the fatigue of labor, and the irksomeness of business; nothing is more conducive, and nothing more indispensable to happiness.

The complaints which are made of the constancy and severity of manual labor, as labor is distributed at present, are much more reasonable. And yet the cheerfulness of the husbandman, as he pursues his daily toil, is proverbial. The expression of his countenance is not that of misery; the language of his tongue is not that of murmuring. Countenances pale with care—countenances darkened with the gloom of disappointment and despondency, and which appear but the darker for the smile that sometimes sits on them—countenances which exhibit an appalling pic-

ture of tumultuous passion, of bitter, unrecompensed suffering, must be sought where the wealthy toil for wealth, where the ambitious strive to rise, and the risen fear to fall. The laborer is a stranger to the very name of these sufferings, than which, the human heart knows few more dreadful. His day is peaceful; his pillow receives him to undisturbed and refreshing slumber. In the past he sees nothing to regret—in the future nothing to fear. His task is regular; his recompense is certain; and here is his compensation, and the rich *know* it is a compensation, for the want of the conveniences which riches purchase. The severity of his labor, without doubt, is greater than is consistent with humanity, or required by utility; but, as the arts improve, the necessity of great manual exertion will be lessened, and, as society advances, the time requisite to devote to industry will be abridged. In the mean time, the oppressiveness of labor is much more really than apparently diminished by that power which the human strength possesses of accommodating itself to its imposed burthen; and it is observable that, excessive as the exertions of the laboring classes are, their recreations are all athletic.

There is little foundation for the complaint of the irksomeness of the employments to which great numbers are condemned. To employments the most disgusting, the mind is reconciled by habit. The tastes of men are infinitely various. An occupation of which one person can never think without horror, another chooses and delights in; a situation in which one man would die of disgust is endeared to another by the gratifications of which it is the source. Professions the most laborious and hazardous are often the fixed

choice of those who might have pursued the most easy and secure. There is no occupation forced on man by necessity, which is without its compensation, and no situation so advantageous as to be the object of general ambition, which is without its peculiar, and not unfrequently its overbalancing inconvenience.

At least, with equal truth, it may be affirmed, that the superior accommodations of the rich uniformly fail to bring with them the happiness they promise. There is a power in constant operation, which, notwithstanding the gaiety and pomp of their appearance—notwithstanding the sumptuous and overflowing board which is daily spread for them, levels their proud distinctions, and raises the peasant, in his humble garb, and with his frugal fare, at least to an equality in enjoyment; that power is habit. Be the apparel of the rich as gorgeous as the arts of luxury can make it, it affords no more comfort to the wearer, than the coarsest habili-ment of poverty. To the pleasurable sensations of the body, its costliness cannot conduce. The gratification which it might afford the mind is effectually counter-acted by the great equalizer of the inequalities of fortune; and while, beneath the ermine and the purple, the heart is oppressed with care, and torn with the fangs of wounded pride and disappointed ambition, beneath the texture of the coarsest woof it beats with freedom, and is at peace.

Nor can the luxuries which pamper the appetite be reckoned among the sources of pleasure, though they may be and are amongst the most powerful of the means which equalize the actual enjoyments of the rich and poor, by scourging the former with many pains and diseases to which the latter are strangers. Luxury

may pall the senses, and does so; but it neither quickens the appetite, nor increases the pleasure of its gratification. The peasant looks forward to his humble repast with satisfaction—a satisfaction of which he is seldom cheated—while the rich sit down to their sumptuous fare with little appetite, partake of it with less pleasure, and arise without refreshment. And to his humble habitation the peasant is as completely reconciled as the man of wealth is habitually unconscious of his palace; habit, which makes the one satisfied without magnificence, renders magnificence little satisfactory to the other.

These are plainly adventitious circumstances, of which happiness is independent. It may be great with them—it may be equally great without them. In the essentials of happiness, in occupation and health, the lot of the poor is at least as favorable as that of the rich, while their common nature is subject to like infirmities. Both are equally exposed to pain and disease, or, if in these respects one be more exempted from suffering than the other, that exemption is in favor of the poor. So true it is that, “when Providence divided the earth among a few lordly masters, it neither forgot nor abandoned those who seemed to have been left out in the partition. In what contributes to the real happiness of human life, these last are in no respect inferior to those who would seem so much above them. In case of body, and peace of mind, the different ranks of life are nearly upon a level.”*

Nor is the evil which is incident to an uncivilized state by any means so great as is commonly imagined. This is a class of evil, the extent of which is at all

* Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments, part iv., chap. i.

times small, yet the reality is less than the appearance, because it is provided with many mitigations.

From the difficulty of procuring subsistence, the number of persons who labor under the privations and sufferings of a rude state of society must of necessity be small. Whenever that number increases so as to become considerable, agriculture must be cultivated, some degree of civilization must commence, and its progress must keep at least equal pace with population. It has been estimated, that the evils belonging to the lowest state of the human race are confined to the four-hundredth part of the whole, and that, on the largest calculation, those who enjoy the advantages of civilization in comparatively a slight degree only, cannot exceed a fortieth of the inhabitants of the globe.

Nor are these people without enjoyment. Every thing which is known of them proves that their situation brings with it many satisfactions. It is indeed so greatly endeared to them, that it is with the utmost difficulty they can be induced to resign it for one which reason and experience show to be beyond all calculation more advantageous. Of this, abundance evidence is on record. Many experiments which have been made on individuals and on tribes attest the fact. "These people are not envious of that civilization of which we are so proud. We may wonder at their ignorance and prejudice, but we must recollect that men are formed by habit, and that all their sufferings and enjoyments are comparative. How often do we see them rejoicing under hardships and bondage, and repining at their lot when courted by liberty and fortune! The feelings we receive from living in one state of society disqualify us from judging of those of another ;

but he who has travelled over the greater space will be most struck with the equal dispensation of happiness and misery, and his value for knowledge will not be decreased by observing that those are not always the most happy who possess it. The savage, still less than the citizen, can be made to quit that manner of life in which he is trained ; he loves the freedom of mind which will not be bound to any task, and which owns no superior ; and, however tempted to mix with polished nations, and to better his fortune, the first moment of liberty brings him to his woods again.”* What is the just inference ? Not that his choice, when he has the power to choose, is wise—not that his lot, while he remains uncivilized, is advantageous—but that pain cannot press heavily on him, and that his situation is not unproductive of pleasure. When he feels the pain of hunger, he does not reject food ; when he sees danger nigh, he does not refuse to avoid it. Habit can do much, but it cannot make a human being in love with pain, or lead him to consider release from it a misfortune. From the fact, then, that it is confessedly difficult to wean the savage from the charms of an indolent and wandering life, it is certain that that life cannot be without some compensation for the evils to which it is exposed.

But there are abundant attestations to the truth, that positive pleasures enjoyed in these rude states of society are by no means inconsiderable. “Among the North American savages, when they are stationary, and the business of the day is over, it is customary for the entire village to sup together at the same time. The prelude to it is a dance of an hour, the dancers

* Malcolm's Persia, vol. ii., p. 619.

chanting singly their own exploits, and jointly those of their ancestors.”*

“According to the ideas of the common people in South America,” says Humboldt, “all that is necessary to happiness is bananos, salted fish, a hammock, and a guitar. The hope of gain is a weak stimulus under a zone where beneficent Nature provides to man a thousand means of procuring an easy and peaceful subsistence.”†

“The Negro exists on his native soil in the most agreeable apathy, without even the fear of want, the chagrin of privation, the cares of ambition, or the ardor of desire.”‡ At sunrise, these people form an assembly, and, as they are arranged in a circle consisting of thirty or forty, of all ages, pass their time in conversation. Their subjects are inexhaustible, and the amusement thus furnished is so attractive, that they separate with great reluctance, sometimes passing the entire day in talking, smoking, and diversion. “Even towards evening, I often observed these coteries in the same place, and conducted with the same gaiety and spirit, the conversation being as animated as if it had just begun.”|| The evenings are devoted to dancing; for, after the setting of the sun, every village resounds with songs and music, and “I have often,” says Mr. Corry, “listened to them with attention and pleasure during the tranquil evenings of the dry season.”§ Here, then, in the easy

* Ashe, of the Shawnees on the banks of the Ohio, vol. iii., p. 70.

† Humboldt, vol. iii., p. 92.

‡ Golberry, vol. ii., p. 303.

|| Golberry. Cook observes the same of the Friendly Islands, Third Voyage, vol. i.

§ Corry on the Windward Coast, p. 153.

life, and in the security as to the future resulting from it, which the Indian and the African, and other nations in similar circumstances, enjoy, is a mitigation of the evils to which they are subject, and a compensation for the inferior rank they hold in the great aggregate of human society.*

Nor is the situation of the lowest of mankind unproductive of those circumstances which form character and constitute a state of discipline. "There is no situation in which a rational being is placed, from that of the best-instructed Christian down to the condition of the rudest barbarian, which affords not room for moral agency—for the acquisition, exercise, and display of voluntary qualities, good and bad. Health and sickness, enjoyment and suffering, riches and poverty, knowledge and ignorance, power and subjection, liberty and bondage, civilization and barbarity, have all their offices and duties. All serve for the formation of character; for, when we speak of a state of trial, it must be remembered, that characters are not only tried, or proved, or detected, but that they are generated also, and formed by circumstances. The best dispositions may subsist under the most depressed, the most afflictive fortunes. A West-Indian slave, who with his wrongs retains his benevolence, I for my part look upon as amongst the foremost of human characters for the rewards of virtue. The kind master of such a slave—that is, he who, in the exercise of an inordinate authority, postpones in any degree his own interest to his slave's comfort—is likewise a meritorious character; but still he is inferior

* See Records of the Creation, vol. ii., chap. vi., in which the evils of an uncivilized state are fully and satisfactorily considered.

to his slave. All, however, which I contend for, is, that these situations, opposite as they may be in every other view, are both *trials*, and equally such. The observation may be applied to every other condition—to the whole range of the scale, not excepting even its lowest extremity.”*

It may be proper, in concluding this survey of the different classes of evil, to notice those evils of the social state which are supposed to result from what is termed the principle of population. The author of the Essay on Population, assuming the fact, that the human species doubles itself in the United States of America every twenty-five years, argues, that it must have an inherent tendency to this duplication, and that, consequently, it would thus double itself always and every where, were not the increase prevented by causes to which sufficient attention has not been paid. Further, he maintains, that, while a thousand millions of people are as easily doubled every twenty-five years, by the power of population, as a thousand, the food to support this vast increase can by no means be obtained with the same facility—that man is necessarily confined in room—that all the fertile land must soon be occupied—and, in short, that the ascertained law is, that population increases in geometrical, but subsistence in arithmetical progression.

The consequence is obvious. Suppose the average produce of the Island of Great Britain could be doubled in the first twenty-five years. In the next twenty-five years it is impossible to suppose it could be quadrupled. Suppose it however, quadrupled. Call the population of the island eleven millions, and suppose the present

* Paley's Natural Theology, p. 528.

produce equal to the easy support of such a number. In the first twenty-five years, the population would be twenty-two millions, and, the food being also doubled, the means of subsistence would be equal to this increase. In the next twenty-five years, the population would be forty-four millions, and the means of subsistence only equal to the support of thirty-three millions. In the next period, the population would be eighty-eight millions, and the means of subsistence just equal to the support of half that number. And, at the conclusion of the first century, the population would be one hundred and seventy-six millions, and the means of subsistence only equal to the support of fifty-five millions, leaving a population of one hundred and twenty-one millions totally unprovided for.

Moreover, it is contended, that the consequence of this principle is immediate—that, long before all the land in a country is brought under cultivation, or that which best repays the labor of the husbandman affords the utmost it is capable of producing—as soon, in fact, as the quantity of food actually raised is inadequate to the comfortable support of the number of persons actually existing—want, and its inseparable companions, vice and misery, must appear—that, although by that law of nature, which renders food necessary to the life of man, population cannot actually increase beyond the lowest nourishment capable of supporting it, yet it may, and its constant tendency is, and, in point of fact, it always does increase, beyond the supply of food necessary to support it in ease and comfort; whence this hypothesis explains, why, in every country of which there is any record, excepting only amongst the first possessors of uncleared land, poverty prevails amongst some of

its members; because, from a principle inherent in human nature, the tendency of the human race is to increase, till the population presses against the limit of the means of subsistence so that in every country there will always be a greater number of persons than the actual and available supply of food can easily and comfortably nourish.

Into the controversy to which these speculations have given origin, and which is still agitated, this is not the place to enter. It is necessary only to observe, that an *actual* increase of the human species, in a geometrical ratio, for any considerable period together, is impossible, and that this impossibility is distinctly admitted. The late advocates of the hypothesis of Mr. Malthus are anxious to disclaim all idea of an increase in any proportion that is strictly regular. But it is contended, that if it be conceded, that the increase at the assigned rate is not regular, the nature of the proposition is wholly changed; the geometrical ratio is given up, and all that can be said of the increase, however great and rapid, is, that there is a power in the human species to multiply its numbers greatly and rapidly. Mr. Malthus says that population, when unchecked, goes on doubling itself every twenty-five years; that is, goes on increasing in the order of 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, &c. This, it is argued, is not possible, because the first term in the series does not at any fixed period with invariable certainty become two, the second term, nor does two at any fixed period with invariable certainty become three, nor three, four, and so on. That the quantity represented by these terms should, at the period stated in the proposition, with invariable certainty, be doubled, is plainly indispensable to the pro-

gression. The slightest alteration in that quantity must be fatal to the uniformity of the result; fatal, that is, to the geometrical progression. The proposition is, that the quantity represented by 1, say 10,000,000, in twenty-five years becomes 2, that is, 20,000,000—in fifty years, 4, that is, 40,000,000—in seventy-five years, 8, that is, 80,000,000—in one hundred years, 16, that is, 160,000,000—and so on. But if, in the precise period specified, this quantity be not invariably augmented in this precise ratio—if it be not so augmented in every successive period—if at one period the number remain stationary, at another increase, and at another diminish, there can be no proper geometrical progression.* Nothing, then, it is

* Since, indeed, the second generation possesses the power of increasing as fast as the first, and the third as fast as the second, and so on, the increase may not improperly be said to be of a *geometrical character*; and in this sense it may be of a geometrical character, without being in strict geometrical progression. The two propositions are by no means identical. If an increase, at a fixed rate, has never gone on with regularity beyond three or four periods, but the regularity of the progression has uniformly been interrupted, and always must be interrupted, by those circumstances which are denominated checks, in what real or practical sense can the increase be said to be in geometrical progression? What is gained by this mode of expression? Mr. Malthus himself affirms, that, “in the *actual* state of every society which has come within our view, the natural progress of population has been constantly and powerfully checked, and that no improved form of government, no plans of emigration, no benevolent institutions, and no degree or direction of national industry, can prevent the *continued* action of a great check to population, in some form or other.”—*Essay on Population*, vol. iii., book iv., chap. i., pp. 63, 64, 5th edition. What, then, is the utility of saying that population, *if unchecked*, would increase in geometrical progression, when it is thus expressly conceded, that population can never be without the

contended, in human affairs, is certain, if it be not certain that the increase in the numbers of mankind is most irregular. Sometimes, for a certain period, say twenty-five years, there is an increase; that increase has never been known to proceed in the same proportion four periods together. Sometimes, for a certain period, there is a diminution; that diminution has never been known to proceed in the same proportion four periods together. Sometimes, for a certain period, the number is at a stand; the period during which it remains stationary is equally irregular. How, then, it is demanded, can numbers, which thus incessantly fluctuate, proceed in geometrical progression?

It will be answered, this reasoning is founded on the actual state of population, whereas the argument to which it is opposed has respect to the inherent power of population, and to the results of that power, supposing its operations were unchecked. It is replied, that it has been shown above, that, according to the statement of Mr. Malthus himself, no state of society can be conceived, in which checks must not of necessity exist, and that, therefore, it is of the essence of this proposition, to suppose what in the nature of things is insupposable. But if the advocates of this hypothesis will be content to say, that there is an inherent power in population, constantly, rapidly, and greatly to in-

continued action of a great check? Surely, without clouding the subject with the geometrical progression, it would be better to say that there is a constant tendency in population to a great and rapid increase—that population must always possess the inherent power of doubling its numbers as easily after the second and third, or after the hundredth or thousandth duplication, as after the first, but that this cannot possibly be the case *for ever* with subsistence.

crease, there will no longer remain any essential difference of opinion between them and their opponents. It follows, from some of Mr. Godwin's own statements,* that there is a power in the human species, under certain circumstances, rapidly to multiply its numbers; and, if the geometrical ratio be given up, this is all which Mr. Malthus himself can affirm. In the principle, that there is an inherent power of increase, they are agreed; they differ only according to the ratio of increase, which both must allow it is not possible to determine with exactness from any data we yet possess. The one contends that the ratio of increase is extremely rapid—the other, that, though it may be occasionally rapid, it is generally slow; but, at all events, Mr. Godwin must admit the truth so constantly and earnestly inculcated by Mr. Malthus; for it follows, from the facts recognized by himself, no less than from the theory he opposes, namely, that prudential restraint is necessary, that without it indigence is inevitable, and that the consequence of indigence must be vice and misery.

Without doubt, the final decision of this controversy will depend upon the facts that shall be ascertained, relative to the number of emigrants into America. The system of Mr. Malthus is founded upon the assumption, that the increase in America has been produced by procreation only. "That increase has frequently been ascertained to be from procreation only," is the proposition to which he constantly has resource, and on which everything is made to rest. If this proposition shall

* Mr. Godwin allows, that in Sweden there has been a doubling of the population, from procreation only, in little more than one hundred years.

be confirmed, his system is established; if it shall be refuted, it falls.

To a certain extent, indeed, some objection might still reasonably be made to his second main position, namely, that while population, if suffered to expand freely, would go on for ever to increase in geometrical progression, subsistence could not, by the wisest and best combination of human agency, be doubled faster than in arithmetical progression. In answer to this, it is urged, that civilization itself is founded on the principle, and depends upon the fact, that every man has the power of producing more than is necessary to his own subsistence—and that this alone is sufficient to prove, that, let mankind increase in whatever ratio they may, subsistence may be made to keep pace with it, *until the whole habitable globe shall have been cultivated in such a manner as actually to yield all that it is physically capable of yielding*—that, whatever be the ratio of increase among mankind, it is in the power of man to cause vegetables and animals, the food of man, to increase with equal rapidity up to the point just stated—that if the vegetable productions of the earth cannot be doubled in a geometrical progression, there is not the shadow of reason to believe that anything in nature can; and that, in regard to animals, if they increase in the same sort of series as human beings, which there is no reason to doubt, there can be no want of subsistence, whatever be that series, for this increase is subsistence;—lastly, that the actual increase, whatever be its ratio, must necessarily be by infants, who consume little—that the demand for subsistence, therefore, at whatever rate the consumers multiply, must be gradual, and, consequently, that it must always be possible to raise

the additional quantity which may be needed—at least *until the earth shall be physically capable of yielding no more than it actually produces.*

From this account of the real state of the question the following conclusions are deducible, for the sake of establishing which, the subject has been here adverted to.

1. In the first place, it is evident, that, even if the law of population be such as is stated by Mr. Malthus, it is not incompatible with the progressive improvement of man. It is commonly said that this hypothesis must degrade man in the estimation of man, because it represents him as too cheap, and that this low estimation of the value of a human being, this contempt of human nature, is fatal to human improvement, and is at the foundation of the enormous errors of statesmen, and the gigantic crimes of warriors—that they could not squander life and violate happiness as they do, did they judge of man as he is—that their estimation of him is universally acknowledged to have arisen from their own selfish and ill-regulated passions, but that to view him as the Essay on Population represents him, is to render him valueless in the eye of reason itself—to make philosophy enter into an alliance with tyranny against him—to snatch from science the shield she was wont to hold over him, and to cover with it his direst foes—error, corruption, and oppression.

But it may well be questioned, whether, on a sober and thorough consideration of the subject, there will appear to be any truth in this representation; for the dignity and worth of man must depend upon what he *is*, and it is not possible that any opinion respecting the rate at which he multiplies his species can affect

our estimation of his nature, his faculties, and his capacity of improvement, for the plain reason, that these must remain just the same, whatever that rate may be.

Because man is endowed with the faculty of reason, can foresee the consequences of his actions, and regulate his conduct by a prudent regard to his well-being, therefore it is in his power to derive from the law of population, supposing it to be such as has been stated, the most excellent advantages, and to prevent it from producing any evil whatever. Suppose the principle of population really is what Mr. Malthus says it is—capable, in no long time, of peopling all the stars, and that, if it had gone on unchecked for eighteen hundred years, it would have produced men enough to fill the whole visible universe with human creatures, as thick as they could stand*—how easy, then, must it be, to people this vast desert, and to crowd with intelligent and happy creatures places over which for ages have been extended the line of desolation and the stone of emptiness! “The quantity of happiness in any given district so far depends upon the number of inhabitants, that, in comparing adjoining periods in the same country, the collective happiness will be nearly in the exact proportion of the numbers; consequently, the decay of population is the greatest evil that a state can suffer, and the improvement of it is the object which ought in all countries to be aimed at, in preference to every other political purpose whatever.”†

Viewing, then, the vast proportion of the habitable globe which is at present without an inhabitant, and contemplating the immeasurable increase of human

* Principles of Political Economy, p. 227.

† Paley's Moral and Political Economy, book vi., chap. xi.

subsistence which it is allowed the earth might be made to yield, I should say, with the able opponent of Mr. Malthus, "How delightful a speculation is it, that man is endowed by all-bountiful Nature with an unlimited power to multiply his species! I would look out upon the cheerless and melancholy world which at present is but a great desert, and imagine it all cultivated, all improved, all variegated, with a multitude of human beings in a state of illumination, of innocence, and of active benevolence, to which the progress of thought and the enlargement of mind seem naturally to lead, beyond any thing that has yet any where been realized. I would count up the acres and the square miles of the surface of the earth, and consider them all as the estate, in fee simple, of the human intellect. I would extend my view from China and England, countries already moderately, and but moderately peopled, to the plains of North America, of South America, of Africa, of many tracts of Asia, of the north of Europe, of Spain, and various other divisions of the prolific world. I should contemplate with delight the extensive emigrations which have taken place to North America, and plan and chalk out, as far as my capacity and endowments of study would permit me, similar emigrations to other parts of the world, that should finally make the whole earth at least as populous as China is at present."*

Under a wise and upright administration of affairs, the power of multiplication in man, however extensive, might be rendered the source of an immeasurable increase of happiness over the face of the whole earth, and wisdom and integrity might prevent for ever those

* Godwin on Population, pp. 450, 451.

evil consequences which inevitably follow when that administration is without wisdom and integrity. Those consequences, therefore, ought in all justice to be referred, not to the principle of population, but to the institutions of society.* They do not disprove the wisdom and goodness of the Deity, in the appointment of the law, but they show the folly of man in the neglect of his true interest. The law itself is beneficent, because, as has been shown, it is capable of producing an immeasurable increase of happiness, and because it is in the power of man to render it wholly and for ever innoxious. He might render it innoxious, because he can obtain the mastery over the grosser impulses of

* By the institutions of society is here meant, not merely positive laws, but the customs, usages, and practical spirit which grow out of them. No direct institutions, it is true, can provide for all circumstances, or regulate all the passions; but those institutions may be so wisely adapted to the nature of man, as to insure to individuals knowledge, virtue, and happiness; and with knowledge, virtue, and happiness, individuals can avert evils which it is certainly not in the power of any government to prevent. It does not admit of question, that, were the government of this country to expend but the tithe of what it does expend in war and in patronage, upon the institutions and support of the wisest arrangements that might be devised, for the education of the children of the poor, (using the term education in the most comprehensive sense, as including not merely the acquisition of knowledge, but of industrious and virtuous habits,) were this government sincerely and earnestly to endeavor thus to put into active operation all the knowledge, philanthropy, and religion, which would be delighted to aid in planning and executing such arrangements, in two generations this country would possess a peasantry intelligent, industrious, virtuous, and happy, beyond what the world has ever yet witnessed, amongst which the terrible evils that prevail at present, and have so long prevailed, could not possibly exist.

appetite, and give to the higher faculties of his nature the government. By a wise arrangement of the circumstances in which he is placed at an earlier period, and trained to maturity, he might be made to see his own interest so clearly, and induced to pursue it so steadily, that it should not be possible for him to deviate from the course prescribed by an enlightened regard to his well-being. This opinion is founded on the universally-admitted truth, that man is what the circumstances in which he is placed make him; and, resting my hope on this basis, I would say, even though the speculations of Mr. Malthus possess absolute truth and certainty, the advancement of man might nevertheless be as glorious as philosophy and benevolence have ever dreamed, and, for their efforts to promote the advancement, there will still be the greatest reason and the best encouragement.

II. In 'the second place, admitting the existence of the law of population, its appointment is not inconsistent with the divine benevolence. This must be obvious from what has been already advanced. The law of population, it has been clearly proved, is capable of producing an immeasurable increase of happiness. It has been shown, that it is in the power of man to prevent it from occasioning any evil whatever; any evil it actually produces, therefore, is not chargeable on the law, and cannot possibly bring into question the wisdom and goodness of Him who appointed it.

But, even admitting that this law does produce some evil, which no wisdom can prevent, and no exertions mitigate—even supposing that it renders man in some respects a less noble and less happy creature than philosophy and benevolence have sometimes thought him,

(concessions for which it would be extremely difficult to show the necessity,) even in this case, it would by no means involve the divine goodness in doubt, because man might be a less noble and happy creature than he has been judged to be, or than he actually is, without any impeachment of the wisdom and benignity of his Creator. In considerations of this sort, we can never too often recur to the second maxim, that of no condition, in which there is upon the whole a balance of enjoyment, can it with truth be said, that its appointment is not consistent with wisdom and goodness. Be the evils which would result from the operation of this law great as any one can imagine, still, every human being might, upon the whole, the whole of his existence considered, enjoy more than he suffers; nay, the balance of enjoyment even in the present state might be in his favor; and being so, no creature could require more. To all objections to this system, therefore, upon the *mere* ground of its inconsistency with the divine wisdom and goodness, this would be a sufficient answer. There may be objections, and insuperable objections to it on other grounds, but on this alone it cannot be overthrown.

A believer in this theory might assume higher ground. He might contend, that all the evils which actually result from such a constitution of man, and such a condition of society as that to which it leads, are designed by the Deity to produce ultimate good, and that a preponderance of good is the actual result even at present. If an inequality of condition be a state the most conducive to human happiness, because in this state the faculties of man are most completely developed, and his virtues most perfectly formed and

most constantly exercised, then the principle of population, it might be argued, must be admitted to be highly beneficial, since it is the chief agent by which that inequality is rendered certain and inevitable. In a state of society in which every man's share of the conveniences and comforts of life depends upon himself—in which he must look wholly to his own conduct and character for the acquisition and preservation of wealth, and honor, and power, and fame—for whatever portion he obtains of the treasures of literature and science, and for whatever measure he enjoys of that refined and exalted pleasure which flows from an intercourse with the wise and good—in a state of society so constituted, the great incentives to human action, hope and fear, must be afforded with unfailing strength and unceasing constancy. And, accordingly, we do actually see, that to this hope and fear, this hope of rising and this fear of falling, is owing all that activity and enterprise, all that physical, intellectual, and moral exertion, which render society what it is, and which give us the best assurance of its future improvement. And the same condition of society must of necessity produce exactly that combination of circumstances which is calculated, in the best possible manner, to form and to prove the moral character of man. In this view, the principle we are considering assumes, in the opinion of its advocates, an importance which entitles it to rank with almost any ascertained law of the physical or moral world. It is the conclusion of all sound philosophy, it is the clear, express, and constantly-repeated doctrine of revelation, that the present is a state of discipline, in which it is intended by his Creator, that the human being should be prepared for

a higher and happier state of existence. To fit it for this purpose, the present state must contain a certain mixture of good and evil, and whether good or evil happen, in general, to an individual, must depend upon certain conditions. Now it is contended by the advocates of this principle, that the circumstances in which it must of necessity place every moral agent are precisely those which are required by a state of discipline — that, accordingly, this great law of human nature has every appearance of having been framed with a reference to this condition of the human being — that, in the first place, it bears upon it the stamp and character of a law, for it is strong and general; and, in the second place, that, in the whole range of the laws of nature, with which we are acquainted, there is not one which in so remarkable a manner coincides with and confirms the scriptural view of the state of man on earth; because there is not one which so admirably secures that combination of circumstances, out of which must ever arise hope and fear, love and hatred, joy and sorrow, wealth and poverty, benignity and malevolence—all the affections and all the passions, all the virtues and all the vices, and in the midst of which the character must not only be formed, but proved.

Whether this be really so, must be left to the individual judgment of enlightened and inquiring men; but such is the view which is exhibited in the *Essay on Population*, and this ought to be borne in mind. Many things have been said, both of that essay and its author, which are neither just nor candid. Mr. Malthus appears to have written with the most benevolent intention, and it is difficult to conceive how any one

can rise from the perusal of his work without a conviction, that he is sincerely and deeply anxious to lessen the prevalence of want and suffering, and to improve the condition of the poor.* It is most unjustifiable to represent him as the advocate of vice and misery, because he endeavors to show that vice and misery must be produced by the operation of the law of population, unless these consequences are prevented by foresight and prudence. He may be wrong in assigning so rapid an increase to the human species as he does; he may have founded his law of population on circumstances insufficient to establish it; but still the main object of his work, that which he keeps constantly in view, and to which he incessantly recurs, is to point out how the pernicious consequences of this rapid increase, how the vice and misery which he thinks it naturally tends to produce, may be counteracted. That there is no other method of improving the condition of the poor, than that of rendering them more provident and more independent—that the consequence of imprudence must be indigence, and the consequence of indigence, vice and misery, are the obvious truths he inculcates—truths which no one can doubt, whatever be his opinions respecting the rate at which the numbers of mankind increase. And if, according to the geometrical ratio, these consequences follow with greater certainty, and to a greater extent, it is not the less true, that it is in the power of prudence and foresight to prevent them.

* It must certainly be confessed, it is a great defect in his work that he has scarcely noticed—certainly that he has not more dwelt upon—the vice and misery produced by bad institutions and bad government.

And, if it be in the power of prudence and foresight to prevent them, that is all which is essential to the hope of the philanthropist, and to the justification of the appointment of the Creator.

There can be no doubt that the happiness, and even the existence, of millions of human beings depend upon the ultimate decision of this controversy. In the meantime, no one can form a just opinion concerning it, who does not study it with a calm and unprejudiced mind. It is the prevailing opinion, that the views of Mr. Malthus are hostile to the best exertions of benevolence, and involve the dispensations of the Deity in deep and inscrutable darkness. It was absolutely necessary, therefore, to enter somewhat into this subject, in an argument on the wisdom and goodness of the Creator, derived from the constitution of man and the frame of society. And it is no small satisfaction to perceive, that, be the law of population what it may, the benignity of the Creator, in the appointment of the constitution of man, of his capacity for improvement, and of the possibility of securing that improvement by the melioration of his condition, and the removal of many of the evils from which he at present suffers, remains much the same. Indeed, however this controversy be determined, the great interests of man *must* remain the same; for, to advert again to an observation already made, to what, after all, does the difference between Mr. Malthus and those who are adverse to his hypothesis amount? Mr. Malthus says, that, under circumstances favorable to its increase, population goes on to double itself every twenty-five years, so long as those favorable circumstances continue; but he distinctly states, that these circumstances have

never, in any age or country, actually continued but for very short periods. Mr. Godwin says, that in Sweden, (where many of the circumstances favorable to a rapid increase obviously do not exist,) population has doubled itself in the space of one hundred years; and he does not appear to doubt, that, were the circumstances which have enabled it so to double itself to continue, it would go on to increase at this rate. The one then affirms, that, under circumstances exceedingly favorable to population, it has doubled itself for some successive periods every twenty-five years—the other, that, under circumstances not peculiarly favorable to population, it has only doubled itself in the course of one hundred years. In the principle, that there is an inherent power in population to increase, they are agreed; the difference between them amounts to no more than this: the one affirms that population naturally tends to increase four times faster than the other says we have any proof from authentic records that it actually has increased for any considerable period. But, whichever opinion future investigation may establish, the difference surely is not of such magnitude, that it may reasonably unsettle our convictions of the wisdom and goodness of the Creator, in the constitution of human nature, and change our conceptions of the condition in which man must be content to live on the earth. Whether it be the law of his nature, to increase with the slowness for which Mr. Godwin contends, or with four times the rapidity, as Mr. Malthus maintains, his welfare is alike provided for; his most important interests are unaffected; his faculties and endowments are just the same, and it must be in the power of those faculties and endow-

ments to enable him to live in equal competence and freedom, with equal virtue and happiness.

In whatever manner, then, this question respecting the principle of population be decided, we may rest with equal trust in the wisdom and goodness of the divine appointment, and anticipate with equal confidence the future advancement of mankind. And when we consider the improvements which have lately been made in some of the arts that essentially conduce to the comfort of life—the noble discoveries of science—the unexampled extension of education—the important knowledge which by its means is diffused, and is rapidly spreading among all classes of the people—the enlightened opinions which are beginning to prevail on those subjects which most deeply affect the present and the future happiness of mankind, and on which the most inveterate prejudices, and the most pernicious errors were formerly entertained—the daily-increasing advantages connected with the press, that admirable invention, by which the improvements and discoveries of an individual are secured to the whole race, and to all ages—the rapid communication which is maintained, not only between the different parts of the same country, but between all the nation of the globe, and the increasing measure in which the advantages enjoyed by one are shared by all—in a word, the general and vast progress which society, notwithstanding its remaining evils, has unquestionably made, it is impossible not to indulge the brightest hopes of its future advancement, and with that advancement is inseparably connected the removal of many of the evils which have hitherto prevailed in the social state, and the mitigation of all. There is especially good reason

to believe, that as it advances there will be a progressive improvement in the spirit in which the affairs of life will be conducted, and that, if it be too much to hope that purely disinterested benevolence will become the master-spring of society, we may be at least assured that an enlightened self-love will be the governing principle of conduct. Men will at length perceive, that in pursuing their own advantage, they must promote the welfare of their fellow-beings—that the selfishness which seeks its own gratification at the expense of another's happiness must defeat itself—that he only can obtain genuine success in the struggle of life, who acts on the principle, that it is an interchange of kind and liberal offices; who scorns to rise by attempting another's fall, and who can taste no sweetness in the bliss which is purchased by another's woe. Each will still labor to promote his own individual advantage, but the competitors will be liberal and enlightened, and the contest will be generous. It will be philosopher contending with philosopher, patriot with patriot, and philanthropist with philanthropist. Without doubt, every commercial, political, scientific, and literary pursuit might be conducted in this spirit; for distinguished individuals, in each of these honorable professions, do actually exemplify this spirit even at present.

And were the powerful offices of the State filled by such men, there would be a gradual abolition of those institutions which are hostile to freedom and happiness. True liberty would flourish. No ban would be fixed on the investigation of any subject of human inquiry. Error would not be allowed to lavish on its advocates the highest emoluments and honors of the State, nor truth to involve its friends in disgrace and penury.

The expression of opinion would be free. Legislation would be restricted to conduct, not extended to opinion; and the tendency of every penal influence would be to prevent the commission of crimes, and to reform the criminal; not first to corrupt, and then to exterminate. It is the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of patriotism, and the spirit of benevolence, which has rendered the state of society, amongst persons of liberal education in Great Britain, so immensely superior to that amongst the wretched inhabitants of Terra del Fuego, and it is not unreasonable to hope, that the same spirit may ultimately give to the inhabitants of Britain as great a superiority over their present condition, as their present condition is superior to that of the savage.

In the condition of the poorer classes especially, it is possible to effect a most beneficial change. The capital evil under which they suffer, the great source of every other, is ignorance. It is melancholy to reflect on the profoundness of that ignorance. Those only whom philanthropy or piety has induced to mix with them, in order to ascertain their state, and to improve it, have any adequate conception of its extent. These benevolent persons know, and these alone really know, that, to exercised minds, the whole creation, and all its wonders and beauties are a blank—that of these unhappy people it is literally true, that they have eyes, but they see not, and understanding, but they perceive not—that the most magnificent appearances in nature produce on them no impression—that events the most momentous, affecting for ages the destiny of their whole race, excite in them no emotion—that subjects the most important, involving their own highest happiness for

life and for immortality, create in them no interest—that the vacuity of their minds is all but absolute—that this absence of any thing that approximates to an intellectual conception, regards alike the most common circumstances out of the routine of their ordinary occupations, and the truths which it concerns them most to know. Yet there is abundant evidence, that the minds of those in the lowest stations might be awakened, their noblest faculties developed, and their highest improvement secured. They might be taught the value of the mind itself, and the importance of exercising and improving it. They might be taught the usefulness of knowledge, by being made to observe some of its most striking and advantageous applications to the purposes of life. They might be made acquainted with some of the more simple laws of nature, and with the true explanation of many of the phenomena depending upon them. That they should ever be able to understand the mysteries of science, or to comprehend her more profound investigations, it were vain to hope; but, from the ease with which very young and unexpanded minds understand the rudiments of science, sufficiently to comprehend the principles on which many of the phenomena of nature depend, that excite our daily attention, and, when those principles are understood, our daily wonder and admiration, it is obviously possible to convey to the lowest of the people much of this knowledge, and thus to enable them to look on the world as an “interpreted and intelligible volume,” instead of a total blank, and to understand the true order and beauty of nature, instead of acquiescing in the most contemptible accounts of phenomena which cannot altogether and at all times escape their

notice. With the principle of many of the arts, and especially of those which are connected with their own calling, they might be made intimately acquainted; and experience has shown that their information might be extended, without disadvantage, to some knowledge of geography, of the solar system, of the history of their own country, and of the ancient world. With the fundamental principles of government, and the fundamental duties of governors and of the governed—with the essential principles of political economy—with those especially, by a regard to which, it is indispensable to their independence and comfort that they should regulate their own conduct—they might be made fully acquainted. With the great doctrines and duties of religion—with the attributes, dispensations, and government of the Supreme Being—with the true object and end of the present life—with the evidence that there is a future state of reward and punishment, of immortality and ever-increasing happiness to the virtuous, and of just retribution to the vicious—with the principal historical facts which establish the truth of Christianity, and the manner in which the simplicity, the sublimity, and the purity of its precepts prove its divine origin—with its undisputed doctrines, with its controverted doctrines, with the chief arguments employed to establish and to disprove each—with its holy precepts, and with the awful responsibility which so much light and such inestimable advantages attach to every reasonable creature—with all this every individual in the lowest class of society might be made perfectly familiar. Is it possible to doubt that so much instruction might be communicated? Say that the distribution of labor shall remain for ever the same as

it is at present, and the time devoted to it the same, (which cannot be,) still let it be considered, what might be done in the years of childhood, during the period of youth, in the hours of the Sunday, and how much persons instructed to a certain extent may be fairly supposed capable of improving themselves in those hours of leisure which come to all. There is no reason to doubt that all which is here anticipated might be accomplished, even by individual exertion; but, if the efforts of individuals were to receive that aid which they ought to receive—if that national energy which has been devoted to the purposes of a criminal ambition were directed to the improvement of the intellectual and moral condition of the people—what might not be effected?

“ If a contemplative and religious man, looking back through one or two centuries, were enabled to take, with an adequate comprehension of intellect, the sum and value of so much of the astonishing course of the national exertions of this country, as the Supreme Judge has put to the criminal account of pride and ambition, and if he could then place, in contrast to the transactions on which that mighty amount has been expended, a sober estimate of what so much exerted vigor might have accomplished for the intellectual and moral exaltation of the people, it could not be without an emotion of horror that he would say, Who is to be accountable—who has been accountable for this difference? ”*

There cannot be in the Christian world any such thing as a nation habitually absolved from the duty of raising its people from ignorance, in consideration of

* Foster's Evils of Popular Ignorance.

a necessity of expending its vigor in foreign enterprize. The concern of redeeming the people from a degraded condition is a duty at all events, and to an entire certainty—a duty imperative and absolute; but, whether rulers and the ascendant classes will coöperate or not, individuals must persevere. And, at least for ages to come, it is to individual exertion we must look for every thing that is effectual in the promotion of this great work.

And let the promoters of education never forget, that, in every school they establish, they oblige a multitude of youthful spirits to direct their attention to something foreign to their wild amusements—that they force them to make a protracted, and in many instances a successful effort to think—that they enable them to acquire a command over what is invisible and immaterial—to rise from the mere animal state, to tread in the precincts of an intellectual economy, the economy of thought and truth, in which they are to live for ever. Let them remember, that a number of ideas, decidedly the most important that were ever formed in human thought, or imparted from the Supreme Mind, will be so taught in these institutions, that it is absolutely certain they will be fixed irrevocably and for ever on the minds of many of the pupils—that it will be as impossible to erase them from their memory, as to extinguish the stars—and in the case of many, perhaps the majority of these youthful beings, advancing into the temptations of life, these grand ideas, thus fixed deep in their souls, will distinctly present themselves to judgment and conscience an incalculable number of times. And what a number, if the sum of all these reminiscences in all the minds now assembled in a nu-

merous school, could be conjectured ! But if one in a hundred of these recollections, if one in a thousand, shall have the efficacy that it ought to have, who can compute the amount of the good resulting from the instruction which shall have so enforced and fixed these ideas, that they shall infallibly be thus recollected ?* And, when these institutions shall have become universal—and they will become universal—they will operate in the intellectual, the moral, and the political condition of the people, a great and glorious change—the prospect of which, while it may well encourage the man of benevolence to devote his best powers and his best days to secure and hasten it, must satisfy him, that it is in man's own power, by wise and virtuous conduct, totally to remove the worst evils of the social state, and so to mitigate those which cannot be removed, as to render them light and inconsiderable.

When, then, a comprehensive view is taken of the provision which the Creator has made for human happiness—when it is considered that, in innumerable instances, pleasure is annexed to the performance of the animal and vital functions, and the exercise of the mental and moral faculties, when no other reason can be assigned for it but the pure benevolence of Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being—that the ordinary state of mankind is a state not of ease only, but of positive enjoyment, and that the season of pain and suffering is extraordinary, coming comparatively seldom, and lasting comparatively but a short period—that the natural and moral evils which prevail, though in themselves oftentimes great and terrible, are parts of the plan designed to form the character and to perfect

* Evils of Ignorance.

the happiness of man—that the evils of the social state especially, though sometimes extremely calamitous, are, upon the whole, much less considerable than they appear, are accompanied with many mitigations, become less and less with every improvement which man works out for himself, and in the meantime accomplish some most useful purposes—when these considerations are fully weighed, they will be sufficient to satisfy the mind, that these evils are parts of a great whole, conspiring, under the direction of unerring wisdom, to the production of consummate happiness. Many things will still, indeed, remain a mystery to us; many things in nature, many things in Providence, many events disastrous to communities, many calamities befalling individuals. Of these we shall never be able to obtain a thorough comprehension in the present state, for the reason so often and so justly assigned, that in the present state we see only a part of the plan, and that, therefore, we cannot possibly have a clear understanding of the whole.

The vast plan of Providence, indeed, would not be what it is, would not be calculated for millions of creatures, and for eternity, if it presented no mysteries to us—if, with our present faculties, and in our present situation, we could comprehend the whole of it. That pain, therefore, in its various forms, is made the active and extensive agent that it is, in carrying on the great scheme—that it falls with such fearful severity on some devoted communities, on some wretched individuals—that it is sometimes the consequence of events which no wisdom can foresee nor prevent, and sometimes of diseases which no skill can guard against nor mitigate—that this should be totally beyond our present com-

prehension, is no more than must of necessity be, we being what we are, and the universe what it is. That it is adopted for wise and good reasons, is an unavoidable inference from what we know of the benignity of the Creator; that in many instances it promotes our happiness, we actually experience, since it is often the monitor of danger, the corrector of error, the punisher of vice, the incentive to exertions which issue in the production of immeasurable and exquisite pleasures. That it does not indicate the imperfection of the benevolence of him who appointed it, is certain; for, let it even be supposed that there really is in its appointment an apparent want of benevolence—of this apparent want of benevolence, two accounts may be given: it may arise either from the reality of the appearance, or from the ignorance, the confined views, and the disadvantageous situation of the observer for perceiving the whole plan of the Great Agent. “It may be owing either to an actual want of goodness, or to the infinity and unfathomableness of it. The first of these accounts contradicts numberless phenomena of nature, is inconsistent with the perfection apparent in the general frame of the world, and opposes our most reasonable apprehensions concerning the nature and attributes of the First Cause. The latter account is in the highest degree easy, natural, and obvious. It is suggested to us by what we have experienced in similar instances, and agreeable to what, from the reason of the thing, we might have foreseen must have happened to such creatures as we are, in considering such a scheme as that of nature. Can we then doubt to which of these accounts we shall give the preference? Is it reasonable to suffer our conviction of a fact, for which we have

good evidence, to be influenced by appearances which may as well be consistent as inconsistent with it—nay, by appearances which, on the supposition of its truth, we must beforehand have expected? ”*

Let us, then, observe the exact state of the case. It can be proved, in the most satisfactory manner, that the Deity is good, because it can be proved that he has imparted pleasure where it can answer no other purpose than that of promoting the happiness of its recipient—that he has therefore rested in the production of happiness as an ultimate object. One such case is a demonstration of his goodness. On the other hand, it cannot be proved that pain is ever occasioned where no purpose is answered by it but the misery of the sufferer. Not a single example can be found in all nature, from which it can be concluded that pain is rested in as an ultimate object;† while numberless instances can be adduced, from which it can be demonstrated, that it is the means of producing good. The utmost which can be said on the opposite side is, that there are particular cases of such a nature that we cannot explain *how* they will terminate in good. Even with respect to these, no one can show that they will end in evil, no one can render it probable; but the probability produced by all which we really know, is altogether against the conclusion. Although we are ignorant of the exact means by which, in these cases, good is promoted, yet

* Four Dissertations, &c. By RICHARD PRICE, D.D., F.R.S., p. 105.

† “No anatomist ever discovered a system of organization calculated to produce pain and disease, or, in explaining the parts of the human body, ever said, ‘This is to irritate—this to inflame.’”—*Paley’s Natural Theology*, p. 502.

we are equally ignorant of the exact means by which a thousand other things are brought to pass, which we are certain happen; and at all events, our ignorance of what we do not know cannot bring doubt upon what we do know; nor can we, without manifest absurdity, conclude that the Deity is not good, merely because we are ignorant of the mode in which, in particular cases, he chooses to accomplish the purposes of benevolence. Belief is founded upon evidence, not upon ignorance; but the notion, that the Deity is not perfectly good, is founded altogether upon our ignorance. Evidence is completely against it—evidence is wholly in favor of his perfect benignity—evidence amounting to absolute demonstration.

Thus we have entered into a particular consideration of the various classes of evil. We have seen that the appointment of it is consistent with infinite wisdom and goodness—that, while its actual amount is by no means so great as is commonly supposed, in every instance in which it does prevail, it produces a preponderance of good, and that it exists only for the sake of that greater good which it is the means of securing. We have seen, then, that the positive proof of the benevolence of the Creator is absolutely irresistible, and that the partial and temporary prevalence of evil, which alone can involve in doubt the perfection of his goodness, is not only not irreconcilable with it, but is as real an evidence of it as the appointment of the sweetest pleasures of which he has permitted the heart to taste. The human faculties cannot be better employed than in investigating such subjects; and perhaps the review of them that has now been taken may tend to remove some doubts which may sometimes have perplexed and disturbed

the mind, and to render its conviction of the most glorious and cheering of all truths more complete, more impressive, and more stable.

SECTION IV.

OF THE DESIGN OF GOD IN THE CREATION.

SUPPOSE, then, the Deity really possesses the attributes which we have endeavored to show must belong to him ; suppose that he is self-existent, independent, infinitely powerful, wise, and good, and that he determines to call into existence millions of beings endowed with such a capacity of happiness, and furnished with such faculties as distinguish man ; what could induce in him such a determination ? By the supposition, he is infinitely powerful, wise, and good ; he must therefore be infinitely happy, because infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, must render him self-sufficient—must supply him, that is, with all the means of happiness, whatever they may be, and at the same time exclude every thing which is incompatible with perfect felicity.

Being, then, infinitely powerful, wise, good, and happy, the inquiry recurs, What could determine him to call into existence a world of sentient and reasonable creatures ? Could it be weakness ? That is impossible ; for, by the supposition, he is infinitely wise, and therefore must act not only with some design, but with wise design. Could it be to occasion misery ? That also is impossible ; for, to suppose that a Being who is infinitely wise, good, and happy, can purpose the production of misery for its own sake, is a contradiction.

What, then, could he design? It is impossible to suppose that he could have any other object in view than the bestowment of happiness—the communication to the creatures his wisdom might form, according to the capacities with which that wisdom might endow them, of a portion of his own felicity.

The happiness of his sentient and reasonable creatures, then, must be God's ultimate end in the creation. It is true, he is sometimes said to have executed this wonderful work in order to display his own glory; but the display of his glory and the happiness of his creatures are identical.

For the reason already assigned, he cannot have been induced to give existence to the vast universe, in order to satisfy any want in himself, or to add anything to his own happiness; because, being self-sufficient, he could have no want, and must always have been in himself completely happy. Nor is it possible that the creation should impart to him anything which he did not originally possess; for all that it is, he made it, and all that it has, he gave it. All the beauty, excellence, and happiness, with which it is adorned, and in which it rejoices, it derives entirely from him; it cannot, therefore, communicate to him anything which it did not receive from him. But without creation his attributes could have had no exercise. His wisdom could have been exerted in no wise contrivance—his power in producing no magnificent works—his goodness in communicating no happiness. There is in him transcendent beauty, inexhaustible excellence, immeasurable happiness. Of these, much is capable of communication. By giving being to sentient and intelligent creatures, he saw that he could impart without limit,

that he could diffuse without measure, various degrees of these glorious perfections. A disposition thus to communicate himself, is an original attribute of his nature; and being so, it is not more certain that he exists, than that he has communicated as high degrees of his perfections as are communicable, to as great a number of creatures as is possible, and that he has communicated them because they are good, that is, because they are happiness. It follows, that the purpose for which he gave being to intelligent creatures was, that he might communicate to them his own happiness.

Still he is sometimes said to have created the world for his own glory, or for his own sake, or to have made himself the ultimate object of his creation; and it is very important to observe what is really meant by this language. Strictly speaking, there is no excellence imparted to the creature, which is not a portion of his own perfection. For this reason, some persons choose to say that he engaged in the work of creation out of a regard to that perfection, since it was the determination to diffuse that perfection, which induced him to give existence to the creature—the creature without that perfection being nothing. Thus they say that the highest gifts of existence are knowledge, virtue, and happiness, but that the knowledge communicated is a portion of God's own infinite knowledge—that it is the same in nature, though infinitely less in degree, and that it consists primarily in a knowledge of himself, in a knowledge of his attributes as displayed in his works—that the same is true of virtue—that the virtue of the creature, in the degree in which it is real, is a participation of God's own moral excellence—that it con-

sists in benevolence, in love to beings in general, and therefore primarily in love to God, who comprehends in himself all being; consequently, that God's own love of virtue is a love of himself; that is, a love of his own excellence; because in strictness there is no excellence in any creature—nothing which any intelligent being can love, that is not his, that is not derived from him, and in a manner a part of him; so that, in loving excellence, he must love himself. In like manner, that God's happiness consists in the exercise and enjoyment of his own attributes—that the creature's happiness in the highest sense consists in the same—in the exercise and enjoyment of attributes the same in nature, however different in degree, and with whatever imperfections mixed; in the exercise and enjoyment, for example, of wisdom, power, and goodness; that, therefore, in as much as there is no true excellence or happiness in the creature, which was not primarily in God, and which was not communicated from God, God must have had in the creation a supreme regard to himself; that is, to the communication of his own excellence and happiness, and have been influenced by a love of himself; that is, a love of his own excellence and happiness.

Now, admitting this representation to be just, still, according to it, the love of himself and the love of the creature are so far from being different or opposite, that they are the very same. His love of the creature is the love of himself, and his love of himself is the love of the creature.

There are persons who think that this view is highly calculated to elevate the mind to God, to lead it to attribute to him all that it is, and has, and hopes—to

consider him as the only source of being and of beauty, of excellence and of happiness—to annihilate self and every object except the all-pervading, all-comprehending Author of the universe—to see him in every thing, and every thing in him—in the truest sense, to render God the great all in all, since, in the most real sense, it makes God the fountain of all. For, according to this view, “all the excellence of the creature is God’s. The knowledge communicated is the knowledge of God, and the love communicated is the love of God, and the happiness communicated is joy in God. So that, in the creature’s knowing, esteeming, loving, rejoicing in, and praising God, the glory of God is both exhibited and acknowledged; his fulness is received and returned. Here is both an emanation and remanation. The refulgence shines upon and into the creature, and is reflected back to the luminary. The beams of glory come from God, are something of God, and are refunded back again to their original. So that the whole is of God, and in God, and to God, and he is the beginning, and the middle, and the end.”*

Those who feel their conception of the Great Author of all things, the only proper agent in the universe, the first cause and the last end of his creatures, elevated by this manner of viewing this important subject, cannot be wrong in indulging it; but it requires considerable comprehensiveness of mind, and some power of abstract reasoning, and of carrying the thoughts above the imperfection and obscurity of language. For, in the language commonly employed on this subject,

* Edwards’ Dissertation concerning the End for which God created the World, chap. ii., sect. vii.

there is much that is calculated to mislead those who are not accustomed to clear thinking and close reasoning. It is important, then, to bear in mind, that all which is really meant is here stated. For God's creation of the world for his own glory does not signify that he created it in order to render himself more glorious, that being impossible, but to display the glory of his attributes to the creatures capable of understanding it and of participating of it: and thus not only to make it known to myriads of admiring and adoring intelligences, but to communicate it to them. Hence he gives existence to rational beings, in order to render them glorious, by imparting to them his own glory; and he is said to do this out of a regard to his own glory, only because it is the communication of his own excellence that renders them glorious. They are glorious because they partake of the Creator's glory. The Creator gave them being for the purpose of communicating to them that glory; that glory consists in a participation of his own excellence, and therefore it is argued, strictly speaking, he gave them existence from a love of his own glory.* Whatever

* "God seeking himself in the creation of the world, in the manner which has been supposed, is so far from being inconsistent with the good of his creatures, that it is a kind of regard to himself, that inclines him to seek the good of his creatures. It is a regard to himself that disposes him to diffuse and communicate himself. It is such a delight in his own internal fulness* and glory, that disposes him to an abundant effusion and emanation of that glory. The same disposition that inclines him to delight in his glory, causes him to delight in the exhibitions, expressions, and communications of it.

* In the above phrase, God's fulness, is comprehended all the good which is in God, natural and moral, either excellence or happiness.—*Edwards' Dissertation*, chap. I., sect. ii.

truth there may be in this representation, it is in fact only another method of saying that he is himself excellence and happiness; that being so, he diffuses excellence and happiness, and that he diffuses them because he loves them. These views, properly understood, seem to lead to no other than just conceptions of the Supreme Being; but they are too refined to be in general accurately conceived and followed. The language commonly employed to express them is apt to confuse and mislead. As far as they are intelligible and clear, they coincide entirely with the more usual opinion, that God's ultimate end in the creation is the happiness of his creatures. This last proposition is universally intelligible, and cannot be misunderstood; it is therefore the better mode of speak-

“In God, the love of himself and the love of the public are not to be distinguished as in man, because God's being, as it were, comprehends all. His existence being infinite, must be equivalent to universal existence. And, for the same reason that public affection in the creature is fit and beautiful, God's regard to himself must be so likewise. In God, the love of what is fit cannot be a distinct thing from the love of himself, because the love of God is that wherein all holiness primarily and chiefly consists, and God's own holiness must primarily consist in the love of himself.

“Love to virtue itself is no otherwise virtuous, than as it is implied in or arises from love to the Divine Being. Consequently, God's own love to virtue is implied in love to himself, and is virtuous no otherwise than as it arises from love to himself. Consequently, whensoever he makes virtue his end, he makes himself his end. In fine, God being, as it were, an all-comprehending Being, all his moral perfections, his holiness, justice, grace, and benevolence, are some way or other to be rendered into a supreme and infinite regard to himself; and if so, it will be easy to suppose that it becomes him to make himself his supreme and last end in his works.”—*Edwards' Dissertation concerning the End for which God created the World*, chap. i., sect. iv.

ing. It is then a truth as obvious as it is delightful, that the design of the Creator must have been the communication of happiness, and that nothing can possibly more effectually display the glory of a Being who is infinitely wise, powerful, and good, than to contrive and effect the happiness of rational creatures.

SECTION V.

OF THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE DIVINE BENEVOLENCE.

FOR the same reason that the Deity designed to make one human being happy, he must have purposed to bestow felicity ultimately upon all. For, if there be a single individual whom he created without this design, since he must still have had some design, it must be different from that which we have already shown to be the only one which he could have had in view.

In reality, his purpose with respect to every individual must have been either to make him happy or miserable. If it were not to make him happy, it must have been to make him miserable; but to suppose that he purposed to make any one miserable ultimately and upon the whole, is to suppose that he purposed the production of misery for its own sake, which has already been shown to be impossible.

And, if every principle of the human understanding revolt at the conclusion, that he is partial and capricious in his kindness, and has designed to make some individuals happy, and others miserable, it is equally opposed by all the appearances in nature. It is refuted by every object to which we can direct our attention. The sun, in the brightness of his glory, diffuses light and joy through all the nations of the earth. He has no favorite to bless. He regards not in his course the little distinctions which prevail among mankind. He

shines not on the lands of the great, forgetting to pour his beams on the lowly spot of the peasant. He lights up the Indies with a burning glow—he smiles upon the nations of Europe with a milder beam, and he shines upon the hoary path of the Laplander, amidst his mountains of eternal snow. “The Lord is good to all. He causes his sun to shine upon the evil and the good.”

The cloud, bearing in its bosom riches and fertility, pours its blessings upon every field, without regarding the name or rank of its owner. “The Lord visiteth the earth with his goodness; he watereth it with the dew of heaven; he maketh it soft with showers; he blesseth the springing thereof.” •

No where in nature are there traces of a partial God. Some inequalities indeed appear in the distribution of his bounty, but this must necessarily be the case, if creatures are formed with different capacities, and endowed with different degrees of excellence. There can be no degrees in excellence—there can be no variety of orders and ranks among intelligent beings, unless some are made higher and some lower, some better and some worse than others. But how low in capacity, how dark and grovelling in apprehension, how little capable of estimating the benignity of the Author of its mercies, must be that mind which dreams that the Deity is partial, because, by diffusing every where a countless variety of capacity, excellence, and happiness, he has adopted the means of producing the greatest sum of enjoyment!

The great things which make us what we are, which minister to the primary wants, and which lie at the foundation of the happiness of all animal and intelligent natures, are always and every where the same. Life

itself is the same, wherever that wonderful power, which imparts to a mass of clay the amazing properties of sensation and intelligence, has operated. Wherever a vital fluid circulates, from the lowest animal up to the highest human being, it flows to diffuse enjoyment. To all, indeed, it does not impart an equal sum of happiness, because it could not do so, unless every object in nature were exactly alike ; but to all it is the source of pleasure. Simple existence is a blessing ; simply to be, is happiness. And this is the case with every race of animals, and with every individual of every race. The Deity has made no distinction in the *nature* of the existence which he has given to his creatures. He has not made the act of existing pleasurable in one and painful in another ; he has made it the same in all, and in all he has made it happy. No reason can be assigned for this, but that he is good to all.

Every appearance of partiality vanishes from all his great and substantial gifts. It is only in what is justly termed the adventitious circumstances which attend his bounties, that the least indication of it can be supposed to exist ; yet narrow minds confine their attention to these adventitious circumstances, and hence conclude that he is partial in the distribution of his goodness ; while all his great and fundamental blessings are so universally and equally diffused, that they demonstrate him to be a Being of perfect benevolence. Now we ought to reason from the great to the little, not from the little to the great. We ought to say, Because, in every thing of primary importance there is no appearance of partiality, therefore there can be really none, although in lesser things there is some inequality in the distribution of the absolute sum of enjoyment ; not

because there is some inequality in lesser things, therefore, there must be partiality, although there is no indication of it in any thing of real moment.

If to this consideration be added what has already been established, that even the most wretched of the human race enjoy a great preponderance of happiness, it will furnish another decisive proof that the Deity designed to make all his creatures happy.

If we look inward on ourselves, and consider all the parts which minister to the perfection and happiness of our nature, whether animal or intellectual, we shall find a further confirmation of this great truth. Did not one God fashion us? Has he given to any one of us more members than to another? Has he superadded to one, in the use of an organ, an exquisite degree of enjoyment, which he has denied to another? Are not all our organs the same, adapted to the same uses, and productive of the same gratifications? Has he not given to all the same number of senses, and made them the source of similar intelligence and pleasure?*

Indeed, no one can imagine, that in the formation and government of the world the Deity has been influenced by partiality, without entertaining the most low and puerile conceptions of his nature and conduct. When of one piece of clay he made an animal without reason, and of another a man, he felt no more partiality towards the clay which formed the man, than towards that of which he constructed the animal without

*If those who are born blind or deaf, or are deprived of any sense by accident, should be considered exceptions to this general rule, it is still only the exception of one case in many thousands; and the loss, even where it does take place, is very generally compensated, in no inconsiderable degree, by the acuteness which the remaining senses acquire.

reason. But he determined to impart enjoyment to an infinite variety of organized and sensitive creatures. It was necessary to the perfection of his plan, that there should be an animal without reason; it was necessary that there should be a man. He therefore gave to each the properties it possesses.

Now, while we suppose that he was not influenced by partiality, in the distinction which he has made between the different genera of creatures, shall we imagine, that when he proceeded to form the species, and still more the individuals, he on a sudden changed the principle of his conduct, and acted solely with a view to gratify a capricious fondness for one individual, and aversion to another—that classes and orders, those great lines of demarkation between different creatures, do not proceed from partiality, but that the slight shades of difference which distinguish individuals from individuals do? Can any conception be more puerile? Every blessing diffused over the creation, which is of great permanent importance, is given, not to individuals, but to the species. This is the invariable law of nature.

But, while the universality of the divine benevolence will be readily admitted, with respect to the blessings which have been mentioned, many persons believe that the Deity acts upon a totally different principle, with regard to the distribution of moral and spiritual favor, and that he invariably confines the communication of this description of good to a few chosen individuals. The most popular systems of religion which prevail in the present age are founded upon this opinion. But if it be a fact, that there is no partiality in the primary and essential gift of existence, in life, considered as a

whole, in the minor properties and felicities of our nature, in our senses, in our intellectual and moral faculties, and in the gratification of which they are respectively the source—if all these great blessings agree on this important circumstance, that they are instruments of enjoyment to all, and that the happiness they actually do impart is universal—it must follow, that there is no partiality in the distribution of moral and spiritual good. For why is this spiritual good imparted to any? Why is it superadded to the merely animal and intellectual nature of a single individual? It must be to perfect its possessor, and to make him susceptible of a greater sum of enjoyment.

We perceive, that, in addition to mere animal existence, man is endowed with organs which constitute him the most perfect of the creatures which inhabit the earth. Why were these organs given him? Without doubt that he might enjoy a higher degree of happiness than the creatures beneath him. To the organs which constitute him a mere (though a very perfect) animal, there are then superadded others which impart to him a rational and moral nature, with a view that he may enjoy a more perfect happiness; but, besides all these, other properties are added, which exalt him still higher in the scale of creation—properties, for the reception of which, the former only qualify him—properties which make him capable of loving his Maker, and of enjoying him for ever. Why is he endowed with these? Certainly that he may enjoy a more perfect happiness than he could attain without them. Must not this reason then induce the Author of these invaluable blessings to bestow them upon the race as well as upon a few individuals?

Let the mind dwell for a moment upon what it is it really supposes, when it imagines that these properties are given to some and denied to others. The difference between the man who is capable of perceiving the excellence of the great and perfect Being who made him, of loving him, and of conforming to his character, and the man who not only is not endowed with this capacity, but is impelled by the principles of his nature to hate the Deity, is infinitely greater than the difference between a worm and the most exalted of the human race. For, if before the religious faculty begins to be developed, there appear no remarkable distinction between them, let them be observed after this principle has been called into action, and has operated for some time. It will then be seen, that in their conceptions, their occupations, and their enjoyments, they totally differ from each other—that they have hardly anything in common—that there is as great a distinction between them, as between the insect which grovels in the dust, and the man who first measured the distance of the stars, and taught us the laws by which the universe is governed. Let the mind look forward to eternity, and suppose, (as always is supposed,) that both will progressively advance, each in his career, through the ages of endless duration; how immeasurable does the distance between them then become!

Now the difference which is here supposed between two beings of the same species, is never found to exist. There is nothing similar to it in the whole range of that part of the creation with which we are acquainted. Differences between individuals of the same species are observable, but there is nothing approaching the immensity of this inconceivable distinction. Whatever

differences prevail, are those of *degree*, not of *kind*. Every individual of the same species, has every essential property the same as his fellows; but here, a property infinitely more important in its consequences than the addition of a new sense would be, is given to one and denied to another. This looks not like the work of the Deity. It is a vast and sudden chasm in a plan of wondrous order, for which no preparation is made, to which we are led by no preparatory steps, for which nothing can account, and which nothing can reconcile. It bears upon it traces of the imperfect and short-sighted contrivance of man; it is contradicted by all which we feel and know of the works of God, and it ought to be driven from the mind of every rational being, that the fair creation of the Deity may no longer be falsified by the deceptive medium through which it is viewed, and that our Maker may not be charged with injustice because our eye is evil!

SECTION VI.

OF THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF FRUSTRATING THE DESIGN OF THE DEITY.

IF the Deity created all men with a design to make them happy, their ultimate felicity is certain; for, if a being propose to himself the accomplishment of a design, he will perform it, unless some motive arise from within to induce him to change it, or some circumstance arise from without to oblige him to change it. Nothing can explain the failure of his purpose, unless it be supposed, either that he has voluntarily changed it, or has been forced by some superior power to abandon it.

If the Deity voluntarily change his plan, it must be for the better or for the worse. If for the better, the original plan must have been imperfect; if for the worse, since he knows all things perfectly, and must therefore foresee the consequence, it follows, that what he perceives to be a good plan, is relinquished for one which he knows to be bad. But the supposition, that a wise and good Being can thus act, is impossible.

If, on the contrary, he has been forced to change his plan, that which obliged him to do so must be stronger than he; for no being will permit his design to be frustrated by a power which is weaker than himself. Whatever, therefore, it be, which frustrates the design

of the Deity, must be stronger than omnipotence, which is a contradiction.

In a word, God is a Being of perfect goodness. He created man with a design to make him happy.* There is nothing in the universe capable of frustrating his design. However, therefore, that design be opposed—through whatever long or painful discipline man may be conducted to happiness, he must finally attain it.

It does not seem possible to avoid this conclusion, but by saying that the Deity possesses other attributes, which are of a nature *contrary* to that upon which the whole of this reasoning is founded; and, in fact, this is affirmed. To all the arguments in favor of the final happiness of mankind, deduced from the goodness of God, it is replied, that God is a Sovereign, and can do what he pleases; that he is just, and must maintain the rights of his law; that he is holy, and must punish sin. All these positions are strictly true; but it is difficult to conceive how they can oppose the conclusions which are deduced from his goodness. They cannot possibly do so, unless the attributes of sovereignty, justice, and holiness, are contrary to goodness; and this is what is really affirmed. These perfections are conceived to be tremendous attributes, which are different from and

* It is nothing to say that the happiness intended to be bestowed upon his creatures by the Deity, is conditional. There can be no doubt that it is so far conditional, that no being can be happy until he becomes virtuous. But the circumstances in which men are placed, and the ultimate effect of those circumstances upon their character, were clearly foreseen by the Deity; and if he perceived that any individual, under any particular combination of circumstances, would never become virtuous, he would either have altered his circumstances, or not have called him into existence. One or other of these measures benevolence required.

opposite to goodness. It would seem like trifling, to confute this opinion, and to show that they can be only modifications of benevolence; yet it is necessary to prove it, and this is attempted in another part of this work. At present it may be sufficient to show, in general, that a Being of perfect goodness can possess no attribute which is inconsistent with that perfection.

SECTION VII.

OF THE HARMONY OF THE DIVINE PERFECTIONS.

A BEING of perfect goodness can possess no attribute which is inconsistent with that perfection; for whatever is inconsistent with goodness is evil, and to affirm that a Being may be perfectly good, while he possesses a single attribute which is contrary to goodness, is to say that he may be perfectly good at the same time that he is evil.

Since whatever is inconsistent with goodness is evil—since it has been proved, that all evil has its origin in want or weakness—since it is universally acknowledged, that God is almighty, and therefore can have no want nor weakness, it follows, that he can possess no attribute which is inconsistent with benevolence.

We have only to determine the nature of an attribute, to decide whether or not it can belong to the Deity. If an attribute be evil, it certainly cannot belong to God. Now the attribute, whatever it be, which inflicts endless misery on any being, is evil. It is not affirmed merely that the attribute is evil which inflicts endless misery on the great majority of men, but that attribute is so which inflicts it even upon one single individual; and the proof is obvious.

Misery, considered in itself, is evil. Misery is only another word which is used to express pain of some

kind or other. Pain, considered simply in itself, is universally admitted to be evil. Whatever produces pain, without doing any thing else, is evil.

Is all pain, then, evil? No. Why? Because some pain has an ulterior object, which is the production of good. Hunger, for example, is attended with pain, but this pain is not evil, because it has an ulterior object. Its design is not to inflict suffering, but to preserve life by inducing the animal to take food. In proportion, therefore, as life is a good to the animal, the pain which excites him to use the means for preserving it is a good.

Now all pain which has not this ulterior object, being pure and simple pain, pain and nothing else, is evil. But misery inflicted through endless ages cannot possibly accomplish this ulterior object, since there is no period in which it can effect it; such misery must be evil, therefore, in the highest possible degree.

It will avail nothing, to say that the object of the infliction of endless misery is not pain, but the satisfaction of immutable justice. This does not in the least affect the argument; for the position is, that that attribute, whatever it may be called, is evil, which inflicts misery upon a being, without doing and without designing to do any thing else to him. To that being it is pure, positive, absolute evil. Whatever makes a being more miserable than happy, the whole of his existence considered, is to him positive evil. A good being must cause to every creature an excess of pleasure above pain, for he is good to it only in proportion as he does so. But, according to the doctrine of endless punishment, God does not cause to the great majority of his creatures an excess of pleasure above

pain ; for he deprives them, through the whole of their future existence, of every pleasurable sensation, and inflicts upon them the most unremitted and intolerable anguish.

It is usual to represent the future punishment of the wicked in the following manner : suppose a large mountain, composed of the minutest grains of sand ; suppose one of these grains to be removed once in a million of years—the length of time which would elapse before the removal of the last of these grains infinitely surpasses our power of conception. Yet this period, immeasurable as it is, is not endless, and therefore can convey to the mind but a faint idea of the duration of the torments of the wicked. We must suppose the globe itself to be composed of grains of sand—nay, all the planets of our system, and all the stars which we behold in the heavens ; we must suppose the particles which compose these immense and innumerable bodies formed into one vast mass, to be removed by the transposition of a single grain once in a million of years—how inconceivable the period that must elapse before the removal of the last grain ! The faculties of the human mind are lost in the contemplation of it. Yet this period is not endless, and it has been often said, that could the wicked be told, that at the termination of such a period their sufferings would cease, the tidings would fill them with inconceivable transport. But they are not permitted to indulge even this forlorn and awful hope. When this dreadful period shall have elapsed, their sufferings will be but beginning ; nay, when millions of such periods shall have passed away, their torment will be no nearer its termination, than at the instant of its commencement. And these sufferings

are represented as most dreadful in their nature. No imagination, it is said, can conceive of their horror. No sensation of pleasure can ever again be felt by the soul, but through endless ages it must continue inconceivably miserable, without the intermission of a single instant, and without any hope of it. And this misery inflicted for the crimes of eighty, twenty, ten years, is inflicted upon the great majority of mankind—inflicted by a Being whose nature is supremely benevolent, and whose tender mercies are at all times over all his works !*

* I profess myself utterly unable, by any language at my command, to convey an adequate conception of the ideas which are in the minds of the advocates of this doctrine. Let one of the most respected of these advocates perform the task himself: “Be entreated,” says Edwards, in his “Discourse on the Eternity of Hell Torments,” p. 28, &c., “to consider attentively how great and awful a thing ETERNITY is ! Although you cannot comprehend it the more by considering, yet you may be made more sensible that it is not a thing to be disregarded. Do but consider what it is to suffer extreme pain for ever and ever—to suffer it day and night, from one day to another, from one year to another, from one age to another, from one thousand ages to another, and so adding age to age, and thousands to thousands, in pain, in wailing and lamenting, groaning and shrieking, and gnashing your teeth—with your souls full of dreadful grief and amazement, with your bodies, and every member of them, full of racking torture—without any possibility of getting ease—without any possibility of moving God to pity by your cries—without any possibility of hiding yourself from him—without any possibility of diverting your thoughts from your pain—without any possibility of obtaining any manner of mitigation, or help, or change for the better ! How dismal will it be, when you are under these racking torments, to know assuredly that you never, never shall be delivered from them ! to have no hope—when you shall wish that you might be turned into nothing, but shall have no hope of it—when you shall wish that you might be turned into a toad,

Such is the doctrine of endless misery. Can any one seriously believe it? Can any human being consider what God is, and what endless misery implies, and affirm that he really thinks the infliction of the one consistent with the perfections of the other?

All the weight of the preceding reasoning, all the obstacles which it opposes to the belief that such can be the end of the greater part of the rational world, created by an infinitely wise, powerful, and good Being, may be applied against the doctrine, that the wicked will be raised from the dead, made to suffer great

or a serpent, but shall have no hope of it—when you would rejoice if you might have any relief, after you shall have endured these torments millions of ages, but shall have no hope of it—when, after you have worn out the age of the sun, moon, and stars, in your dolorous groans and lamentations, without rest day or night, or one minute's ease, yet you shall have no hope of being delivered—when, after you shall have worn out a thousand more such ages, yet you shall have no hope, but shall know that you are no one whit nearer to the end of your torments—that still there are the same groans, the same shrieks, the same doleful cries incessantly to be made by you, and that the smoke of your torment shall still ascend for ever and ever, and that your souls, which shall have been agitated with the wrath of God all this while, yet will still exist to bear more wrath—your bodies, which shall have been burning all this while in these glowing flames, yet shall not have been consumed, but will remain through an eternity yet, which shall not have been at all shortened by what shall have been past!”

In the next page he adds, “Besides, their capacity (that of the wicked) will probably be enlarged, their understandings will be quicker and stronger in a future state; and God can give them as great a sense, and as strong an impression of eternity as he pleases, to increase their grief and torment.”

What a tremendous, what a savage thought! What a thing is system! To think that a man, possessing a heart of flesh, and an understanding enlightened by the Christian religion, can steadily

bodily anguish, and then blotted out of existence for ever. Against the doctrine of endless punishment, it seems decisive; against the doctrine of limited punishment, terminated by destruction, it applies with great, though not with equal force; for, while the first opinion teaches that he acts altogether contrary to goodness, the second represents him as not acting up to what sober and unassuming reason seems to indicate the full measure of it.

In a word, if God be really a Being of perfect goodness, who can at no time act without the most benevolent design—if, when he created man, he intended that he should be pure and happy, and if there be nothing in the universe capable of frustrating his purpose, both the doctrine of endless misery, and that of limited punishment terminated by destruction, appear to be attended with insuperable difficulties. But if, on the other hand, the sin which at present prevails, and

contemplate such a scene as this, and imagine it is a just exhibition of the conduct of the Author of this beautiful and happy world! Such conduct is worthy of the mind that plotted the inquisition, and of the heart that first leaped in exultation at the device of consuming the body in the flaming faggot for the good of the soul; but to impute it to the pure, and lovely, and benignant Spirit that presides over the universe—language cannot speak the horror that is in it.

While feeling as I do, the utter inability of language to express the deep reprobation with which such representations ought to be regarded by all Christians, I should think myself deficient both in candor and justice, were I to omit to state a truth of which there is abundant evidence, and of which I rejoice to perceive that the evidence is increasing, namely, that in the present age many persons who believe in the doctrine of endless misery shrink with unfeigned horror from such exhibitions of it. Many excellent and pious persons, some of whom I have the pleasure of knowing, though

the punishment which in future will be inflicted upon it, be the means employed by the Deity to accomplish his benevolent purpose—if the state of discipline in which he will place his erring creatures be so wisely adapted to their mental and moral disorder, as to oblige them to perceive, and feel, and hate, the folly of which they have been guilty, to excite in them a deep sorrow for it, and a real love of goodness—and if, when thus fitted for pure enjoyment, he mercifully permit them to participate of it, every difficulty vanishes, everything is consistent, everything is glorious, every counsel is benevolent, and every perfection harmonizes with the event. His justice, his holiness, his wisdom, his power, his goodness, will have been exerted, and exerted successfully, to bring about a result truly exalted and glorious. Then, indeed, may the universal acclamation of praise burst from his intelligent creation—*Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!*

they cannot satisfy themselves that the terms in which the Scriptures speak of the endless suffering of the wicked import less than an endless duration, and though they profess themselves unable to see any injustice in the infliction of an endless punishment, yet believe that the degree of suffering actually imposed will not exceed that which is perfectly consistent with infinite benevolence. What that degree is, they do not presume to determine. On this awful subject, they are content to take the language of Scripture as they find it, and wish uniformly to adhere to that language, satisfied that, whatever be the degree and the duration of the misery really threatened, the Judge of all the earth must do right. While, therefore, their wishes incline them to milder views of the divine inflictions, they highly disapprove of such representations of them as those that have been cited, which they think, if considered and believed, must fill the mind with too much terror, to exert a reasonable and steady influence over it, and, if not considered and believed, can be of no service.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF THE DOCTRINE OF UNIVERSAL RESTORATION, FROM THE NATURE OF MAN.

A SKILLFUL artificer, in constructing a piece of machinery, modifies and combines its various parts so as to make them subservient to a particular purpose, and we estimate the perfection of the mechanism by the completeness with which everything is included necessary to secure the intended results, and everything avoided which may impede it. In the external frame of man, there is the most exquisite adaptation of different parts to each other; the most beautiful results are designed and accomplished by contrivances, at one time extremely simple, at another wonderfully complicated, but at all times perfectly wise and efficient. The external frame of man, however, is only a part, and a very inferior part, of this wonderful microcosm; and, since such inimitable skill has been exerted in the construction of it, we must conclude that the *whole nature* of man is designed to answer some purpose, and, if it be right to judge of the importance of the object by the magnitude of the means employed to secure it, a purpose truly excellent.

If we examine the higher faculties with which man is endowed, and judge of the purpose for which they are imparted, by that to which they are adapted, we

cannot mistake the ends they are designed to answer. All the noble properties by which he is distinguished may be arranged, with sufficient accuracy for the present purpose, under his intellectual powers, and his social and moral tendencies. He can observe the beauty and order of the world in which he is placed; he can investigate the causes of its phenomena; he can ascertain the laws by which it is governed; he can penetrate into the secret recesses of nature, and contemplate the process by which many of the wonders which surround him are formed; he can extend his views beyond the boundaries of his own world, calculate the distances of the worlds above him, ascertain their magnitude, and trace their movements. He can perform a still more difficult task. He can retire into himself, investigate the principles and propensities of his own nature, and reason respecting the very faculties by which he conducts the astonishing process of thought. Endowed with affections which lead him out of himself, and attach him to his fellow-beings, he can rejoice in their joy, and weep for their woe; he feels bound to them by tender and endearing ties; without their society, he is gloomy and sad; so long as he cherishes the generous affections in his intercourse with them, cheerfulness smiles upon his features, and happiness dilates his heart. He can sit in judgment on the nature of his own conduct, distinguish between good and evil, and, while he glows with admiration at the contemplation of every generous and sublime affection, he feels indignation and disgust at the selfishness which considers only its own good, and the vice which pursues it at the expense of the general happiness. He can hold intercourse with the Great Being

who gave him existence, and who crowns him with good; and, though a mysterious veil, which he cannot pierce, shroud the Sovereign Spirit from his mortal vision, yet he can feel a solemn and endearing consciousness, that he is continually present with him—that he is above him, and beneath him, and around him; he can hear his voice instructing him in his duty, and perceive his hand directing him in his course, and rejoice in his promise, that he shall reawake from the sleep of death, burst the fetters of the tomb, enjoy immortal youth, and pursue with unwearied step, through the countless ages of eternity, attainments which rise higher and higher in infinite progression, and which perpetually fill and enlarge his capacity. Forgetting the enjoyments of the present life, which is but as a moment of time, compared with eternal duration, he is capable of acting with a view to his immortal dignity and happiness, and of resigning all which he now holds dear and valuable, if necessary, to promote his future felicity.

For what can a being thus wonderfully endowed be called into existence? For what are such faculties given him? To be for ever misdirected and abused—to be wasted on littleness, and devoted to folly—to adorn and secure the triumph of evil, and to afford to the universe an eternal spectacle of majestic desolation, and fallen and perverted grandeur? Or to add to the beauty of the fair creation, by proving that one principle pervades it—that one almighty power directs its operation—that in the higher, as well as in the lower part of the works of God, nothing is made in vain—that the means are universally adapted to the end, and the end invariably secured by the means?

If this be not the case, how singular is it, that man should furnish the only instance in the creation, of a complicated adaptation of means which answer no end, or rather of an admirable and exalted provision, entirely perverted from its purpose! If we examine any other part of the world—if we look beneath us or above us, we can perceive nothing analogous to it. All the inferior animals fulfil the object of their creation; they take no thought of to-morrow; they look not before nor after; the sun shines upon them, they bask in its beams, and are content; the verdant surface of the earth presents them with a rich repast; they eat, they lie down to rest, they rise with the morning's dawn, pursuing from day to day the same unvarying round, and happy without knowing or desiring to know more. Those exalted intelligences of which we are accustomed to conceive as forming the highest orders of creation, and fulfilling the highest counsels of the Sovereign Spirit, however sublime their capacities, and illimitable their desires, are filled with that adorable object which they continually contemplate and serve. Why, then, is man the only creature in the universe, who possesses a nature which falsifies every appearance, and disappoints every expectation—a capacity which enables him to soar with the seraph, and a destiny which levels him with the brute?

The few attainments which he at present makes should by no means render it incredible, that his distant and advanced progress will be thus sublime; for those attainments, inconsiderable as they are, afford an animating assurance of his ultimate perfection. They form the commencement of a course, which, as it is to continue through an interminable series of ages, so it

must promote an illimitable improvement. They *may* terminate, it is obvious, in a perfection of knowledge and happiness, as great as the imagination can conceive; for, in order to do so, they require no change in their nature, but only an increase in their degree. The very acquisitions which an enlightened and virtuous man has already made, carried on to their possible extent, may place him at a point as high in the scale of creation, as that which the first-born seraph at present occupies. Nor does what we know of his past oppose what we thus augur of his future progress. Who, that saw Newton when an infant, leaning on his mother's bosom, and had never witnessed an instance of a similar progress, would have believed that that little and fatuous creature would, in the short space of a few years, be able to measure the distances of the stars, and to teach to a listening world the laws which regulate their mighty movements? The attainments of such a being, in his progress from infancy to manhood, are infinitely more wonderful than any which we suppose him afterwards to make; for in the one case it is an astonishing progress commencing from nothing; in the other it is only the continuance of a course already greatly advanced; so that it is not even so incredible, that a man should arrive at the attainments of an angel, as that an infant should gain the acquisitions of a man.

Neither ought any present neglect or perversion of his powers to bring doubt upon the conclusion, that his ultimate destiny will be thus sublime; for a temporary and partial obstruction to his progress may be finally beneficial, and it is evidently the design of his Creator to lead him on to perfection by slow degrees,

and from a low origin. At all events, it is certain that every human being possesses a capacity for this illimitable improvement, and that, if the great majority of mankind are to continue for ever ignorant, vicious, and miserable, this capacity, unlike anything else in the creation, is given in vain.

And, however great and lamentable the present errors and imperfections of mankind be, yet it is obvious that they have made, and that they are making, a gradual advancement towards a better state. Already they have gained much, and what they have acquired they will retain. Never was their knowledge so varied and extensive as it is at present; never were they in such favorable circumstances for enlarging and perfecting their acquisitions. In many instances we at present recognize such a liberality of thinking among the common people, as would have been sought in vain, a few years ago, in the most enlightened philosophers; and the youth now commences his career where the aged used to terminate their course. It is impossible to foresee where this will end; it is impossible to predict the extent to which this improvement may be carried, or the influence it may have in diffusing an enlightened and comprehensive view of what is wise and just in conduct, in checking the indulgence of gross selfishness, in controlling the turbulent and eradicating the malignant passions, and in forming virtuous and benevolent habits.

But, even though all this should be a dream, and we should be obliged to admit the melancholy conclusion, that error and misery are connected by an insoluble bond with the present state, and that the experience of the past, and the discoveries of the future,

will avail nothing to deliver mankind from their influence—yet, if there be a hereafter, surely it is more reasonable to conclude, that these disorders will cease then, that the discipline under which the mind will be placed in this new state of being will correct, not increase its perversion, and that, instructed by experience, and purified by suffering, it will at length see things as they are, and estimate them as it ought, affording to its faculties their proper exercise, and to its affections their proper objects, than that its errors will continue through endless ages, or till they have effected its utter destruction.

To all this reasoning, however, which should seem no less solid than cheering, it has been objected, that the fundamental principle upon which it is founded is not just—that the strict connection which it supposes between the purpose and the event does not invariably happen—that there are in nature adaptations which do not always secure the intended result, designs which are not completed, and that, in fact, there are many cases in which the object of nature is evidently and completely defeated—that every blossom, for example, does not ripen into fruit, nor every embryo attain the maturity of which it is capable, and for which it was obviously designed—that in every instance of this kind there is as great a failure of the design of the Deity, as can well be imagined, and that as this is not supposed to be inconsistent with his perfections, so there may be the same apparent frustration of his plan with regard to human beings, without any impeachment of his wisdom or goodness.

To this objection, which is much more ingenious than solid, two answers may be given. In the first

place it may be replied, that, though all analogical reasoning is founded upon a comparison of the lower with the higher parts of creation, and of the higher with the lower, yet this objection supposes that comparison to be carried further than it can justly be extended, namely, to the final destiny of creatures of different orders. Because a being of an inferior order terminates its existence at a certain period, and with certain phenomena, we cannot conclude that a being of superior order will do the same. A striking conformity between a particular organization in a fly and a man may lead to the conclusion, that that organization is designed to answer a similar purpose in both. This deduction from analogy is fair and conclusive. But if, because at a certain period this insect changes its state, and thereby loses for ever its conscious existence, it be inferred, that a change of state in man, in many respects similar, is also attended with a final loss of conscious existence, this deduction from analogy is not fair and conclusive; because there may be something in the nature of a being possessing the faculties of a man, to prevent that change from being final, which does not exist in an insect possessing only the properties of a fly. Being already distinguished from the fly by the faculty of reason, he may possess this other distinctive property of surviving his apparent dissolution; or their common Creator may have something in view, by appointing the change in the one which he may not have in the other. The analogy to this extent, therefore, does not hold; but to this extent the objection under consideration supposes it to hold; for it supposes that human beings may be prematurely destroyed, because the rudiments of an

insect or vegetable are so. It is, therefore, a false analogy.

Another very important view may be taken of this subject. Nothing is more evident than that, in many instances, the inferior part of the creation is made chiefly, if not entirely, for the use of the superior. The vegetable world is formed for the animal, and in like manner, to minister to the convenience and comfort of the higher, appears in many cases to be the final cause of the existence of the lower orders of the animal creation; and, supposing these lower orders to be at the same time happy, as far as they are capable of being so, (which is always the case,) this is a plan of admirable wisdom and beauty. Supposing, for example, it were wise and good in the Deity to give to the superior animals of our globe their present constitution—a constitution, that is, to the support of which many of the fruits of the earth, and many of the inferior animals, are necessary—then it is an instance of wisdom and goodness, to make such a provision, that these fruits and animals shall always sufficiently abound; for, were they from any cause to fail, the most disastrous consequences must ensue to those higher orders, for which chiefly the inferior exist. Now the only way by which it seems possible, by a general law, (and we have seen that it is by general laws that the Deity executes the purposes of his government,) to guard against such a calamity, is to provide in every period more of these inferior beings than is absolutely necessary at any; and there will appear the greater wisdom in this appointment, when it is considered, that beauty and enjoyment will be multiplied by it in the exact degree in which the superabundance may prevail. For this care, there-

fore, to provide for possible as well as actual existence, we see the most benevolent reason ; so that, though every blossom do not ripen into fruit, nor every embryo develope its latent faculties, this is so far from being a proof of the frustration of the plan of the Deity, that it is directly the reverse, since this superabundant provision is the very means he has adopted to secure his purpose. These blossoms and embryos, though they perish, fulfil the design of their creation. Had they been necessary, they were ready to ripen into maturity, to supply the want which might exist ; but, not being needed, they read an instructive lesson to the intelligent creation, saying to it, "Behold the never-failing care of your Creator to secure your happiness!" and then are seen no more.

In the second place, when, from the failure of the blossom, and the destruction of the embryo, it is urged that there may be a similar loss in regard to human beings, it may be replied, that there is really no sort of parallel between the two cases. Every blossom, it is true, does not ripen into its proper fruit, nor every embryo grow into a perfect animal ; yet neither is any blossom or embryo *pervverted* from its genuine nature, into one which is opposite. Every blossom of an apple does not ultimately form an apple, but neither does it become a poisonous fruit. Every embryo does not grow into a perfect animal, but neither does it degenerate into a disgusting monster. But the doctrine which teaches that man was created for purity and happiness, but that he will continue for ever vicious and miserable, and that which teaches that he will remain so for unknown ages, and then be destroyed, not only suppose that he does not attain his proper nature, but that it

becomes perverted into that which is directly opposite. It supposes what never takes place, what is not only not supported by any analogy of nature, but what all analogy contradicts; it supposes a change infinitely greater than would happen, were the blossom of an apple to fail in forming an apple, and ripen into hemlock, or the embryo of a lamb, instead of producing the most innoxious of animals, to grow into an adder. Nothing like this ever takes place in any of the works of God with which we are acquainted. It is reasonable, therefore, to conclude, that it will not occur in his highest and noblest. Were this example adduced to show that the same *kind* of failure might take place among human beings—that those human embryos, for instance, which never see the light, and those infants which die before the development of their faculties, perish, there would thus far be some analogy between the two cases, and that which happened to the one, might, with some show of reason, be supposed to befall the other; but, for the reasons assigned in the first answer to this objection, the conclusion would not be valid even thus far; and further than this it could not possibly go. To argue from it that man, whose nature fits him for the attainments of an angel, not only falls short of these acquisitions, but degenerates into a malignant spirit, is altogether gratuitous. There is no analogy between the one case and the other.

In a word, both the doctrine which teaches that man will go on to sin and suffer for ever, and that which maintains that he will do so for unknown ages, and then be destroyed, must be founded either upon the principle that the Deity, when offended, is not to be appeased, or that man, when he has departed from the

path of rectitude, is not to be reclaimed. No one will venture to maintain that the Deity is unappeasable; and to suppose that he is unable to reclaim his offending offspring is equally absurd.

Indeed, from what we know of man's nature and of the adaptation of the moral government of his Creator to it, we can clearly perceive *how* he may be reclaimed, even from the lowest depths of guilt.

He is (to repeat what has so often been said) the creature of circumstances. He is made what he is, entirely by the train of events which has befallen him. The powers with which he is endowed have been called into action by surrounding objects, and the nature of that action has been determined by that of the objects which have induced it. Had the situation of any human being varied in the least, there must have been a proportionable difference in his character.

This is so true, that any being who had entirely in his own hands the direction of the events of the world, and who possessed a perfect knowledge of the nature of man, might make his character whatever he pleased. There is no affection, however fixed, which he might not change—no habit, however inveterate, which he might not eradicate. And this he might effect, as we have already shown, without putting the least constraint upon the will, or making the slightest infringement on the liberty of the moral agent; for, by changing circumstances, he might alter his volition, and thus excite in him the desire to do or to be whatever he might wish him to accomplish or to become.

Now this direction of events, and this knowledge of character, the Deity is always supposed to possess, in a

supreme and perfect degree. There is nothing which he does not know—nothing which he cannot accomplish. Suppose, then, it is his will to reclaim a person who has lost all taste for goodness, and contracted the most inveterate habits of vice. The reformation of such a being is a thing in itself possible. As, then, the Deity knows every thing, he must perceive what circumstances will be adequate to produce the requisite change; and, as he can do every thing, it must be in his power to cause this train of events to happen. Here, then, is a power abundantly adequate to accomplish whatever may be necessary.

That this formation of the character of man, by the circumstances in which he is placed, is perpetually going on, under the divine direction, in the present state, is acknowledged on all hands, and constitutes what is termed the moral government of God. Now the defect of every scheme but that which it is the object of this reasoning to establish, is, that it makes the operation of this moral government to cease with the present state. But, if the wicked are to exist hereafter, it is certain that they must be placed in some circumstances; these circumstances must have some effect upon their minds, and the nature of that effect, whether it be such as to confirm them in their vicious course, or to reclaim them from it, must entirely depend upon the constitution of these circumstances. It is a Being of perfect wisdom upon whom that constitution depends. Can we then doubt that it will be such as to secure reformation, and not confirmation in vice?

Let the mind, then, seriously consider what the human nature is—that it is capable of pure, refined, and exalted happiness, in an illimitable degree—that it is

made for the enjoyment of this felicity—that its benevolent Author exercises over it a continual government, which tends to remove, and which, if its operation continue, must ultimately remove all that is opposed to it—and determine which scheme is most probable; that which teaches that the great majority of mankind shall never taste of happiness, but suffer the most intolerable and unremitted anguish during an endless being, or that which affirms that, after having endured this misery for unknown ages, they shall be for ever blotted out of existence, or that which maintains, that all which their Maker designed concerning them shall come to pass—that the very sin and suffering which afflict them shall be the means of working out their final purity and happiness, and that they shall accomplish this in so excellent and perfect a manner, as triumphantly to prove, that, notwithstanding all our present difficulties about the existence of natural and moral evil, **THE BENEVOLENT PARENT OF MANKIND HAS ACCOMPLISHED THE BEST END BY THE WISEST MEANS.** If the latter opinion be indeed favored by these two great principles, the perfections of God and the nature of man, its truth must be considered as established.

If, then, we could go no further, the arguments which have been adduced to support the doctrine of the ultimate restoration of all mankind to purity and happiness appear sufficient to produce a rational and solid conviction of its truth. They prove, certainly, that it rests upon much firmer ground than either of the doctrines which oppose it; and when, in connexion with this, *the doctrine itself* is considered, every reflective mind must surely incline to prefer it. If, then, we could not produce another argument in support of

it, and if, on examining the scriptures, it be found that they do not contradict it, (supposing they do not expressly favor, if they do not directly refute it,) it must be admitted as true, because in that case there will be much to favor, and nothing to oppose it. But, in point of fact, reason furnishes us with still more conclusive arguments, and the scriptural evidence in support of it is decisive.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF THE DOCTRINE OF UNIVERSAL RESTORATION, FROM THE NATURE AND OBJECT OF PUNISHMENT.

ONE of the chief objections to the doctrine which it is the object of the preceding reasoning to establish, is, that although the Deity is in the highest degree wise and good, yet that he is, at the same time, an irreconcilable enemy to sin—that he will visit it with the punishment it deserves, and that, while we are sure that that punishment must be great, we have no means of ascertaining its exact extent.

If the doctrine of Universal Restoration denied this, that circumstance would be fatal to it, whatever might be urged in its favor; but God's abhorrence of sin, and his determination to punish it, not only do not militate against this doctrine, but afford the most powerful arguments in support of it.

In order to be satisfied of this, it is necessary only to establish clear and precise conceptions concerning the nature of divine punishment. What is the meaning of this term? It has been lately defined thus: *Punishment is the conduct of God with respect to the wicked, in the capacity of a Judge.*

The defect of this account is, that it is a definition which requires a definition; for, when, in an inquiry concerning the nature of divine punishment, it is said that

it is the conduct of God with respect to the wicked, in the capacity of a Judge, we must inevitably put the ulterior question, what is the nature of that conduct? whence another definition must be given, which perhaps may require a third.

Let the following definition be substituted for the former: *Punishment is the infliction of pain, in consequence of the neglect or violation of duty.* When we say a person is punished, we mean that he suffers some pain or privation, in consequence of his having omitted what he ought to have done, or of his having done what he ought to have avoided.

Is there any distinction between punishment and revenge? They are universally believed to be totally different in their nature. What, then, is the exact difference between them? It is of the utmost importance to ascertain this, because revenge is the only thing with which punishment can be confounded.

It has been said that punishment is the infliction of pain, in consequence of the neglect or violation of duty. Let us then say, that *Revenge is the infliction of pain, in consequence of the commission of injury.* The neglect of duty seems to give rise to punishment—the commission of injury to revenge. But, since the commission of injury must necessarily be resolved, either into a neglect or violation of duty, it follows, that these two definitions are exactly the same. Either, therefore, the definition of punishment must be defective, or that of revenge must be false; for, if these two things really differ from each other, it is impossible that the same definition can apply to both.

We purposely made these definitions defective, in order that the difference between punishment and re-

venge might be more clearly seen, and that the appearance of taking for granted the point in dispute might be avoided.

It is necessary to add to the former definition, of punishment, the words, "with a view to correct the evil," and to that of revenge, the words, "with a view to gratify a malignant passion." These definitions will then stand thus:—

Punishment is the infliction of pain, in consequence of the neglect or violation of duty, WITH A VIEW TO CORRECT THE EVIL.

Revenge is the infliction of pain, in consequence of the commission of injury, WITH A VIEW TO GRATIFY A MALIGNANT PASSION.

That the pain which punishment occasions must be inflicted with a view to correct the evil produced by the neglect or violation of duty, will appear perfectly obvious, by attending to the exact meaning of the language we are in the habit of employing on this subject. What do we mean when we say that we neglect or violate our duty? We mean, that we neglect or destroy our own happiness, or that of others. When we neglect or destroy our own happiness, or that of others, we produce a certain degree of misery. This is wrong, since it is contrary to the design for which we exist, which is to communicate and to enjoy happiness. On account of the commission of this wrong, punishment is inflicted; that is, another portion of misery is produced. Who causes this second portion of misery? The punisher. Thus far, then, the punisher and the punished are on the same footing; they have both done exactly the same thing; they have both produced misery. What, then, con-

stitutes the difference between them? The violator of his duty deserves punishment, because he has done that which either has produced, or which tends to produce misery; but the punisher himself has done exactly the same thing; that is, he has occasioned pain. Why, then, is he *not* worthy of punishment, for the very act of punishing?

The reason is to be found in the *design* with which the punisher inflicts the pain of which he is the occasion. He has in view the restoration of the offender to a state of feeling and action indispensable to the happiness of others, and to his own. He produces misery, but it is the instrument he employs to destroy it. If he have not this in view, he is even more criminal than the person he punishes, since the infliction of pain is the only thing he designs. He rests in it as his end; it is his ultimate object. But the vicious in general produce misery only incidentally, through a mistaken and perverted pursuit of happiness, and it is more malignant to aim *solely* at the infliction of pain, to rest in it as an object and end, than to occasion it by a miscalculation of the means of enjoyment. It is this very circumstance, that it rests in misery as its ultimate object, which constitutes the extreme malignity of revenge; and it does not seem possible to show how he who inflicts pain on an offender, from any other motive but that of correcting the evil of which he has been the occasion, acts upon a different principle.

When it is said that punishment must have respect to the correction of the evil produced by the violation or neglect of duty, it should be observed, that this is meant to include both the evil disposition of the criminal, and the evil consequences which his crimes occa-

sion. That correction is evidently imperfect, which has respect to the one, but not to the other—which aims to remove the injury done to society, but not the evil principle which is its source—or, on the contrary, the evil principle, but not its injurious consequences.

Though the misconception which prevails on this subject has originated chiefly from denying the corrective nature of punishment, yet, in point of fact, no one disbelieves that it is corrective. Many persons, indeed, deny it in express terms, and much of their reasoning seems to depend upon their disbelief that it has any tendency of this kind; but sometimes they strenuously contend for the very point which at others they labor to disprove. Though they affirm that punishment is not corrective, what they mean is, that it does not amend the evil disposition of the criminal. They acknowledge that it corrects, or is designed to correct, the evil consequences of his offences. But if it be the design of punishment to repair or to counteract the evil effects of a crime to society, it is in its nature corrective. If the reformation of the criminal form no part of the design, it is not so corrective as it would be, were that the case. But it is certainly corrective, and the error lies in supposing that punishment is intended to correct only a part of the evil, the bad consequences of a criminal disposition, but not the criminal disposition itself.

In punishments inflicted by human beings upon one another, it is often difficult to effect both, as indeed it is to accomplish either; but it is universally acknowledged, that that punishment is not benevolent, which does not aim at, nor that effectual which does not secure, both.

And surely it is possible to render every penal infliction thus complete. If pain or privation can counteract

the evil consequences of the conduct of an offender, it may be so applied as to eradicate his evil disposition. He who is perfectly acquainted with the criminal temper, understands exactly the circumstances which would change it, and has a sovereign control over events—has the power to correct it; and, if he punish with any design, it is inconceivable that this, which is not only the most benevolent, but the most necessary, will form no part of it.

But it is urged, that there is an intrinsic demerit in sin—something in its nature which requires that it should be visited with punishment; that is possible, therefore, to punish an offender without a view to correct the evil, and without revenge, namely, to satisfy the claims of immutable and eternal justice.

Before replying directly to this objection, it may be observed, that the term justice is often used as though it expressed an attribute which is contrary to goodness. But, in reality, justice is only a particular modification of goodness—goodness modified by wisdom, according to the moral condition of the being with respect to whom it is exercised. A person who forgives an offence upon repentance and reformation, is good. This is one modification of goodness, which is designated by the term mercy. The person who visits an offence which is neither repented of nor amended, with a proper degree of pain, is also good. This is another modification of goodness, to which the term justice is applied. Mercy and justice, therefore, do not differ from each other in their nature, since they equally arise from benevolence, and they differ in aspect only, according to the moral condition of the being with regard to whom they are exemplified; so that justice cannot require the inflict-

tion of misery for its own sake. Nothing but malignity can either desire or approve of such unavailing suffering.

Since justice and mercy equally arise from benevolence, there is as much reason to suppose that mercy requires the infliction of misery for its own sake, as that justice does. The object of justice is not to feast itself with suffering, but to produce happiness by the infliction of pain, where wisdom teaches it is necessary. The object of mercy is exactly the same, only it pursues its purposes by omitting the infliction of pain, where wisdom shows that it is *not* necessary.

There is, it is affirmed, an intrinsic demerit in sin—something in its nature which requires that it should be visited with punishment. What is that something? I think we may venture to affirm, that no one can imagine it to be anything but the tendency of sin to produce misery. But the infliction of pain, upon that which has a tendency to occasion pain, is the application of an effectual remedy to a destructive disease—not the visitation of suffering upon something which is inexplicable, with a design which is equally incomprehensible.

If what is here termed demerit, and which is supposed to be something intrinsic in sin, require, as an equitable satisfaction, the infliction of a certain degree of pain, without aiming at the reformation of the offender, or the prevention of sin in future, its infliction with this view alone is the infliction of nothing else but misery, the production of which is all that is done or designed—a remedy which, as has just been observed, is more malignant than the disease itself. It is vain to repeat, that the object in view is the satisfaction of justice, not the infliction of pain, for this is to reason in a circle; it is to say, that justice requires that sin

should be visited with pain, on account of its intrinsic demerit, and then to argue, that there is an intrinsic demerit in sin, because justice requires that it should be visited with pain.

It seems possible, however, to go much further in reply to this objection, and to show that the term demerit is without meaning, upon the hypothesis which is here assumed. Let us attend to the manner in which we come at the idea which the word expresses.

There is such a thing as virtue, and there is such a thing, of an opposite nature, as vice. Such is the constitution of man, that virtue must eventually promote his happiness, and vice his misery. In proportion as an action partakes of the nature of virtue, it is said to coincide with the object of this constitution, and to merit happiness. In proportion as it partakes of the nature of vice, it is said to be opposed to the object of this constitution, and to deserve misery. The very origin of this word, then, leads us to a moral constitution, which can have no object but the production of happiness and the prevention of misery; and accordingly we find that the degree of demerit in an action—that is, the degree of suffering it deserves, is always in proportion to the extent of the misery it tends to produce.

That all the divine punishments are corrective, is evident likewise from every thing which we see or know of these inflictions. All experience is in favor of the doctrine of corrective punishment, and against that which denies it. To what example can we point, where misery is connected with sin, in which the pain has not a tendency to correct the evil? Every passion of our nature carried to excess is criminal; every passion carried to excess is painful. This pain is said

to be the punishment of the passion, now from its having passed the bounds of moderation and justice, become criminal. The same is true of every evil propensity and habit whatever. All are attended with pain or inconvenience, which increases in proportion to the enormity of the evil. What is the design of this constitution? It is not possible to mistake it. It is not in our power to assign to it any other object than the correction of the excess, the eradication of the evil propensity, the change of the evil habit.

If, then, in the very constitution of our nature, we recognize this benevolent design—if our own hearts punish us for all our deviations from the path of rectitude, and will not permit us to be at peace in sin, in order that we may continually follow after virtue—can we suppose that the punishment which the Deity will hereafter inflict upon his erring creatures will have no such tendency—that the pain which he makes the natural consequence of transgression is purely and highly corrective, but that which he himself will bring upon the transgressor, that which by his own direct act he will superadd, will not be so—and that, instead of perfecting, by his immediate and decisive interposals, the primary object of the constitution of his creatures, he will totally abandon it, and pursue one of which he has given no indication in their nature, and to which nothing in their nature tends?

That all the punishment inflicted upon offenders in the present state is corrective, is universally acknowledged. Those, therefore, who suppose that this will not be the case in a future world, must believe that the Deity will hereafter punish with different design from that which he pursues at present—that he will change

the object and end of his inflictions. But why will he do so? What reason can there be to believe that the purposes of Him who changeth not is thus mutable? The mode and the measure of punishment he may vary; circumstances may require it of his wisdom, but his great and ultimate object, like his own most perfect nature, must be eternally the same.

But to arguments of this kind, other arguments, tending to establish an opposite conclusion, have been urged, which, as this is a point of capital importance, it may be proper to notice.*

Objection 1. It is admitted, by the advocates of the corrective nature of punishment, that the punishment which will be actually inflicted on the impenitent, whatever be its amount and duration, is the curse of the divine law; but the punishment which leads to repentance is upon the whole no evil, and therefore no curse, because by the supposition it is necessary to repentance, and to prepare for the everlasting joys of heaven. Instead, therefore, of being a curse, it is the greatest blessing which Omnipotence itself can bestow.

Answer. If by the curse of the divine law be meant positive and absolute evil, it is true that there is no curse annexed to the divine law; for it has been already shown, that there is no absolute evil in the universe; and Mr. Edwards himself, as ardent an advo-

* The following objections and reasonings are taken from the celebrated work of Dr. Jonathan Edwards, entitled, "The Salvation of all Men Strictly Examined," in reply to Dr. Chauncy. They comprehend all which any one can conceive to be important in his second and third chapters, in which various considerations, tending to prove that the future punishment of the wicked will not be conducive to their personal good, are urged with much acuteness.

cate for endless misery as his son, quotes with approbation a passage in which the opinion, that under the divine administration there is no real and ultimate evil, is asserted in express terms.* In a most important sense it is true, that the punishment which leads to repentance is upon the whole no real evil, and that future punishment, as it is necessary to produce, and effectual in producing, repentance, and in preparing the sinner for ultimate happiness, is the greatest blessing which Omnipotence itself can bestow ; nevertheless, it may still be called a curse, because, in the language of scripture, severe and protracted suffering is often so denominated.

Objection 2. On the hypothesis, that future punishment will be corrective, it follows that all men will not be saved, because deliverance from the curse of the law is essential to salvation ; but if the curse of the law be that punishment which is necessary to lead to repentance, and if a great part of mankind will suffer this punishment, it follows that a great part of mankind will not be saved ; for to be saved, and yet to suffer the curse of the law, is a contradiction. Moreover, a deliverance from the curse of the law would be a deprivation of the greatest good which God, in their present temper, can possibly bestow upon the wicked.

Answer. This objection is entirely verbal. The advocates for the corrective nature of punishment do not believe that all men will be saved, but that, sinners having been reclaimed by the discipline through which they will be made to pass, all men will ultimately be rendered pure and happy. Accordingly, they main-

* Edwards on the Will, part iv., sect. ix., p. 370.

tain that the impenitent must be subjected to future punishment, for the very reason assigned in the objection, that, were it otherwise, it would argue a defect of wisdom and goodness in their moral Governor, since it would be to withhold from them the greatest good which, in their present temper, he can bestow upon them.

Objection 3. If the penalty of the law consist in that punishment which is necessary to lead to repentance, then all upon whom it is inflicted, when brought to repentance, are delivered from further suffering—not on the ground of mercy and goodness, but of justice. They have satisfied the divine law. If, therefore, they are not immediately released from further punishment, they are injured and oppressed. Accordingly, all forgiveness of the impenitent is impossible, since forgiveness implies that the sinner forgiven is not punished according to law and justice; but, on the hypothesis under consideration, all who suffer future punishment are punished according to law and justice, in as much as they endure that punishment which is necessary to repentance.

Answer. It is true, that all who suffer future punishment endure the penalty of the law, and therefore, in a popular sense, cannot be said to be forgiven. It is true, also, that, after they have suffered all the punishment annexed to the law, any further punishment of them would be unjust. Their exemption from further punishment is therefore, without doubt, required by strict justice; and yet, under the divine administration, it is highly improper to speak even of that very exemption as a matter of right; for, such is the nature of punishment under the government of God, that it is as benevolent a provision as the direct and

immediate bestowment of happiness. It is not only the actual communication of good, but the communication of good in the form best calculated to secure happiness. The sinner is therefore as much indebted to the Creator for it, as he is for the gift of life itself, and for that constitution of his nature which renders life a blessing. When, therefore, that happy period shall have arrived, when punishment shall be no longer necessary—when it shall have accomplished its work—when it shall have eradicated the disposition to evil, and have produced a fitness for happiness, instead of proudly claiming exemption from it, the sinner, with unbounded gratitude, will adore and bless his benignant Creator for having inflicted it. He will perceive that it was the wisest and kindest provision which his heavenly Father could possibly have made for his happiness, and with the profoundest emotions of dutiful obedience and filial love, he will thank him for it.

The punishment inflicted upon the sinner being, then, in truth, the communication of good to him, in the manner that is best adapted to his moral state, it is evidently absurd to speak of his claiming exemption from it as a matter of right. It is the necessary though painful means to a wise and benevolent end, and it will cease, of course, as soon as it has accomplished its end.

This view of punishment is truly honorable to the Deity—truly calculated to win the most obdurate to the love and adoration of him; while that view of punishment which is implied in the objection is essentially unjust, because it is the infliction of mere pain—pain that answers, and that is intended to answer, no

beneficial purpose, which—as it is perfectly inconsistent with goodness, so it must be totally irreconcilable to justice.

Objection 4. If the only just end of punishment be repentance, and there be any curse of the law at all, it must be repentance itself.

Answer. The curse of the law is not repentance, but the suffering necessary to produce repentance.

Objection 5. Of the only just end of punishment be to lead the sinner to repentance, and to promote his individual good, and if all just punishment be a mere discipline, necessary and wholesome to the recipient, then punishment inflicted for any other end is unjust. It is therefore unjust to punish a sinner on account of any contempt of the Deity, any opposition to his design and to his cause, or on account of any injury which he may do to his fellow-beings, excepting so far as he injures himself at the same time.

Answer. Those who maintain that punishment inflicted by an infinitely wise, powerful, and good Being, must be corrective, do not mean that it must correct the evil disposition of the sinner alone, without any reference to the injury done to the system. They contend that perfect goodness must aim at both—that infinite wisdom must perceive the means by which both may be accomplished, and that almighty power must be able to render those means effectual. To effect one end alone, while both are equally possible and equally necessary, they believe to argue an imperfection which cannot exist under the divine administration. It is just to punish the sinner on account of contempt of the Deity, and opposition to his will, both because that

contempt and opposition are injurious to the sinner himself and to the system, and it is the proper object of punishment, to repair the injury done to both.

Objection 6. On the hypothesis, that all punishment is corrective, it must be maintained, that vindictive punishment is unjust; yet at the same time it is admitted, that the punishment actually inflicted is in the highest degree vindictive. For a vindictive punishment is that which is inflicted with a design to support the authority of a broken law; but if the punishment which is necessary to lead the sinner to repentance be sufficient to support the authority of the divine law, and be inflicted for this end, as is admitted, it is to the highest degree vindictive, and designedly vindictive. Those, therefore, who allow, that as much punishment will be inflicted on the sinner as satisfies the demands of law, while they mean to oppose vindictive punishment, hold it in the fullest sense.

Answer. A law is a rule designed to regulate the conduct of an intelligent being. It is implied in its very notion, that it is imposed for the good of that being; it exists only for the sake of that good; it cannot, therefore, have any interest or demand separate from or opposed to that good. Any punishment annexed to the violation of it is imposed not for the sake of the law, but for the sake of the being for whose welfare the law is instituted. Separate from that being, the law is nothing; separate from his welfare, it is useless. When, therefore, its right, and claim, and demand are spoken of, all that can be meant is, that its sanction ought to be such, and so certainly imposed, as to secure obedience; that is, to secure the welfare of this being. To maintain the rights of the law, then,

to vindicate its claims, to satisfy its demands, and to promote the good of the being for whose welfare it was instituted, must be identical. If, therefore, by vindictive punishment be meant that which is inflicted with a design to support the authority of the divine law, vindictive punishment and corrective punishment are precisely the same.

Objection 7. If sin deserve no other punishment than that which is subservient to the good of the sinner, it will follow that sin is no moral evil; for that which is subservient to a person's good is no real evil; but moral evil is in its own nature odious; hence it is not injurious to the perpetrator of moral evil, to manifest disapprobation of his conduct, whether such manifestation be subservient to his good or not.

Answer. Moral evil is in its own nature odious only in so far as it tends to produce misery. Punishment itself is the infliction of misery. To punish the perpetrator of moral evil, without aiming to correct his evil disposition, is to produce a certain sum of misery because a certain sum of misery has already been produced, and to do no more; but the production of this second portion of misery, with this design, is no less evil than the production of the first. Whereas, if punishment be inflicted on the perpetrator of moral evil, with a view to correct his evil disposition, natural evil is made the instrument of correcting moral evil. On this supposition, the actual and ultimate sum of happiness may be increased by this partial and temporary prevalence of both, and therefore the permission of both may be consistent with perfect goodness.

Objection 8. If the only just end of punishment be to produce repentance, sin immediately followed by re-

pentance deserves no punishment, because the end of punishment is already obtained; but repentance, though it is a renunciation of sin in future, makes no alteration in the nature of the sin which is past, nor is it any satisfaction for that sin. Neither, if the correction of sin be the only proper end of punishment, is it just to inflict punishment on sin as sin. Whether it be followed by punishment or not, must depend, not on its own proper nature, but on some accidental circumstance, as whether it be followed by impenitence, or whether it be persisted in; and, if it do not deserve punishment unless it be persisted in, then the first act of sin is no moral evil; but, if the first act be not a moral evil, why is the second, the third, or any subsequent act?

Answer. Sin, immediately followed by sincere repentance, does indeed deserve no other punishment than that which, by the constitution of the human mind, is inseparably connected with conscious guilt, because the end of punishment is already obtained. It has been shown above, that punishment, under the divine administration, is not retrospective, but prospective—has no respect to the past, excepting in so far as the past influences the future. Repentance, it is true, makes no alteration in the nature of the sin which is past, neither does any punishment which can be inflicted; nor is there any just or intelligible sense in which satisfaction can be made for sin, which does not include a reformation of the sinner. Sin is no otherwise sinful, no otherwise a moral evil, than as it produces pain; and the only proper object of punishment is to counteract that tendency; but that counteraction is as complete as is possible, as soon as repentance is induced. The whole evil of sin consists in its tendency to produce pain.

An action, therefore, is sinful in proportion as it has that tendency; whence the demerit of sin does not depend, as the objection states, on some accidental circumstance, as whether it be persisted in, or whether it be the first act, and so on, but on its tendency to produce pain.

Objection 9. If future punishment be merely disciplinary, the discipline will produce its effect on some, sooner than on others. The discipline of the present state is oftentimes successful, even within so short a period as three score years and ten; we may therefore reasonably conclude, that within the like term far greater numbers will be brought to repentance by the more powerful means which will be used in the future state. With what truth, then, can the wicked be threatened with everlasting punishment, and why is there no intimation given that there will be a difference in that duration?

Answer. The words employed in the sacred scriptures, to denote the duration of the punishment of the wicked, naturally lead to the conclusion, that it will be protracted; but, with regard to the actual duration of it to any individual, or to any number of individuals, it determines nothing. The scriptures have drawn a veil over this, as over everything that relates to the future world, which is well calculated to impress the mind with awe; but no objection can be fairly urged against the corrective nature of future punishment, because the scriptures enter into no detail respecting its duration.

Objection 10. If future punishment be merely disciplinary, it is inflicted without any necessity, and therefore must be a wanton exercise of cruelty; for the

repentance of sinners might be easily obtained without the imposition of dreadful torments for ages of ages. That same wisdom and power, which lead many to repentance in this life, might, by similar or by superior means, produce the like effect on all. Or, if a more painful discipline be necessary, a more painful discipline might be imposed, or God might exhibit the truth with such clear and overwhelming evidence, as inevitably to produce conviction.

Answer. Such a discipline, in the present state, as would certainly and uniformly secure reformation, or such an exhibition of the truth as should produce a universal and influential conviction of it, is possible; but, were it adopted, the whole system of things must be changed. Such a discipline, such an exhibition of the truth, are obviously incompatible with the present constitution of man, and with his actual relations. But it has already been shown, that the present system is adopted because it is upon the whole the wisest and best. Future punishment is a necessary part of that system. What the actual amount and duration of it will be, we do not know. With undoubting confidence, we may leave it to the determination of that wisdom which is absolute, and of that goodness which is perfection. Absolute wisdom—perfect goodness, we may be assured, will inflict no more than is indispensably necessary. The infliction of so much misery for so much misery, which is all that punishment can be, if it be not corrective, is indeed wanton cruelty, and is therefore inconsistent with the attributes of the moral Governor of the world; but the infliction of a certain degree of misery, in order to produce an immeasurable degree of happiness, is compatible

with the highest wisdom and the most perfect goodness.

Objection 11. It is implied, in the very idea of a disciplinary punishment, that it is consistent with the divine perfections to subject a sinner to misery for his own good. Why, then, is it not equally consistent with those perfections to subject him to misery for the sake of promoting the good of the system, provided that misery do not exceed the demerit of the subject? If the punishment of the sinner may lead him to repentance, so it may lead other sinners to repentance, or it may restrain them from sin, and in a variety of ways may as much subserve the good of those who are not the subjects of punishment, as of him who is. And that the good of other persons may be of equal, nay, of far greater importance to the system, than the good of the transgressor himself, cannot be denied.

Answer. This argument assumes, that the infliction of endless misery for the crimes of a few years is consistent with justice; but that this assumption is false, will be shown in the chapter on the justice of God; and, if false, the argument on which it is founded is of course fallacious. Moreover, it is not just to argue, that, because it is consistent with the divine perfections to subject a sinner to misery for his own good, it is equally so to subject him to misery for the sake of promoting the good of the system, because this implies that the good of the individual and of the system is incompatible, whereas it is identical. In the fair and glorious system of creation, designed by infinite goodness, arranged by unerring wisdom, and effected by almighty power, the exquisite and endless misery of the majority is not made necessary to the happiness

of the minority, but the happiness of the whole is secured by the ultimate happiness of every individual. That the happiness of the whole is as possible as the happiness of a few, and that a system in which the ultimate happiness of the whole is secured is more excellent and perfect than that in which the majority are rendered endlessly miserable, cannot be denied; we ought therefore to suppose that the former is the system which the Deity has adopted, because it is the most worthy of his attributes. The latter is not worthy of those attributes; it is not compatible with them. It is inconsistent with goodness, to give existence to any creature, without making that existence, upon the whole, a good to him; consequently, though it be just to subject the sinner to misery for his own good, yet it is alike irreconcilable to justice and to goodness, to subject him to misery for the sake of promoting the good of the system, unless the balance of happiness, upon the whole, the whole of his existence considered, be in his favor. It is perfectly consistent with justice and benevolence, to promote the good of the system, by any disposition whatever, of any number of creatures, provided they enjoy, upon the whole, more than they suffer; but any disposition of them, for any purpose, which renders it necessary that they should suffer more than they enjoy, is a plain violation of rectitude; because non-existence is no evil, but existence with a preponderance of misery is; and an intelligent being, who acts voluntarily, and who gives existence to any creature, knowing that it will be, upon the whole, an evil to him, performs as malignant an act as can be conceived. And, if this be true, though but one creature suffer, upon the whole, a preponderance of misery,

what language can express, what imagination can conceive, the imperfection in which all the attributes of the Creator are involved, upon the scheme, that he brought into existence the great majority of mankind, with the design of afflicting them with unutterable torments through endless ages, in order to promote the happiness of comparatively a few! It is a scheme as unworthy of the wisdom, as it is incompatible with the goodness, of the great Parent of mankind.

Thus, the more this subject is investigated, the more clear and overwhelming the evidence becomes, that punishment, under the divine administration, is corrective; and, if this position be established, the whole controversy is decided.

The inferences deducible from the preceding observations throw upon this subject a light and glory which render it an object of gratifying as well as of impressive contemplation.

If the punishment which the Deity inflicts be corrective, it follows that no punishment can be without end; for a punishment which is both corrective and endless is a contradiction in terms.

If all punishment be corrective, it follows that no more punishment than is absolutely necessary to produce reformation will be imposed; for he who endeavors to correct an evil will accomplish his object as speedily, and with as little loss of happiness as possible.

If all punishment be corrective, it follows that as much as is necessary to eradicate sin will be inflicted. This to the sinner is a most alarming consideration. God cannot inflict infinite misery upon a finite being; but we know not to how great an extent, within the limit of finiteness, it may be just, and right, and neces-

sary to impose it. Of all the truths which can occupy the attention of human beings, this certainly is the most momentous. If there be certainty in religion, or truth in God, he who in the present state neglects the improvement of his privileges, indulges evil habits, lives in sin, and dies in impenitence, must in a future world endure an anguish of which at present he can form no adequate conception. It is reasonable to believe that this *must* be the case; for the bitter consciousness of self-degradation, and the horror of deep remorse, must be felt, and we require to know no more, to be assured that the sensation must be intolerable. Such is the dictate of reason; the declarations of scripture confirm it. They describe the punishment of obstinate and unrepentant guilt as a fearful looking for of wrath, treasured up against the day of wrath. It is the worm that dieth not; it is a fire that is not quenched. It is the worm of remorse, preying with incessant avidity upon an awakened conscience; it is the fire of tumultuous passions, which cannot be quenched till it has consumed the evil of the heart which has indulged them. Though justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne, thou art terrible, O Lord, in thy chastisements; for terrible is the evil with which thou art at war, and which it is the design of thy benevolent chastisement to eradicate. "Let, then, the wicked man forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him turn unto the Lord, who will have mercy upon him, and unto our God, who will abundantly pardon him."

Part Third.

OF THE OBJECTIONS WHICH ARE URGED AGAINST THE DOCTRINE OF UNIVERSAL RESTORATION, WHETHER DERIVED FROM THOSE PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE, OR FROM THOSE REASONINGS WHICH ARE SUPPOSED TO PROVE THE DOCTRINE OF ENDLESS MISERY, OR FROM THOSE WHICH ARE CONCEIVED TO FAVOR THE DOCTRINE OF LIMITED PUNISHMENT, TERMINATED BY DESTRUCTION.

HAVING considered those arguments in favor of the opinion, that purity and happiness will ultimately and universally prevail, which appear to be in a great measure independent of the testimony of revelation, it would now be proper to examine the evidence which the Scriptures afford in support of it. But, as many objections to this doctrine, commonly deemed insuperable, are derived from the language of Scripture, it is necessary to consider, in the first place, the validity of the testimony which it thus seems to bear against it; otherwise, the evidence which it really affords in its favor will not have its just weight upon the mind.

The chief objection to the doctrine of Universal

Restoration are derived from two sources ; from certain passages of Scripture, and from certain reasonings which are supposed to prove the doctrine of Endless Misery, and from certain expressions which are conceived to favor the doctrine of Limited Punishment, terminated by destruction. It will be proper to consider each separately.

CHAPTER I.

OF ENDLESS MISERY.

THE doctrine of Endless Misery teaches, that, with the exception of the first man, God brings the whole human race into existence with an innate propensity to evil*—that, to counteract this fatal tendency, in favor of a few individuals, termed the elect, he especially interposes,† irresistibly influencing them to avoid whatever might endanger their salvation, and to do what is

* “The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell consisteth in the guilt of Adam’s first sin—the want of that righteousness wherein he was created, and the corruption of his nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually.”—*Assembly’s Larger Catechism*, quest. xxv.

† “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him thereunto, and all to the praise of his glorious grace.”—*Confession of Faith*, chap. iii.—“All those whom God hath predestinated unto life, AND THOSE ONLY, he is pleased, in his accepted time, effectually to call.”—*Ibid.*, chap. x.

necessary to secure it*—that the great majority of his creatures, termed the non-elect, he leaves to the operation of a nature which must inevitably ensure their ruin†—that for these unhappy beings he does not interpose‡—that he abandons them to endless and inconceivable misery,|| and that from all eternity he appointed them to this dreadful destiny, by an irreversible decree, determining them to condemnation.§

The most execrable tyrant that ever desolated the world is benevolence itself, compared with the character which this tremendous doctrine gives to the benevolent Parent of the human race. If it be true, God is

* “They whom God hath effectually called can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved. This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election,” &c.—*Assembly’s Larger Catechism*, chap. xvii.

† “Others, not elected, although they may be called by the ministry of the word, and may have some common operations of the Spirit, yet they never truly come to Christ, and therefore cannot be saved; much less can men not professing the Christian religion be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they never so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and to the law of that religion they do profess; and to assert and maintain that they may is very pernicious, and to be detested.”—*Ibid.*, chap. x.

‡ “These men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and the number is so certain and definite, that it cannot either be increased or diminished.”—*Confession of Faith*, chap. iii.

|| “The punishments of sin in the world to come are everlasting separation from the comfortable presence of God, and most grievous torments in soul and body, without intermission, in hell-fire, for ever.”—*Assembly’s Catechism*, quest. xxix.

§ “By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men are foreordained to everlasting death.”—*Confession*, chap. iii.

not good; for it has already been proved, that, in giving existence to sensitive creatures, a benevolent being must make it upon the whole a blessing. No creature, it is admitted, has a right to existence; it is a boon to which it is impossible that there could have been a previous claim; but, being bestowed, justice as well as benevolence requires that it should be rendered, upon the whole, a good. However low an individual may be placed in the scale of being, or whatever pain may be mingled in his lot, if the balance of happiness be in his favor, he can ask no more; his great inalienable right is respected; it is his duty to submit to the evil with resignation, and to accept the good with gratitude; but if the balance of pleasure be against him, he has cause to murmur, and the Being who gave him life upon such terms is not good, nor can any sophistry prove him to be so.

Were it *possible* for benevolence to reside in the bosom of a being who could decree the intolerable and unending anguish of millions, and millions, and millions, of his creatures, it might indeed be inferred, that the God of election is good to the elect; but to the non-elect he is not good; he never was, and he never intended to be. He gave them existence with a determination to make it an everlasting curse;* he brought

* To say that it is not God's decree, but man's own sin, which renders him miserable for ever, is trifling in the extreme; for, since God is his Creator, he must be the Author of that nature which he brings with him into the world; so that, if it be utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually, it is such only in consequence of his Creator having been pleased to make it so. The circumstances in which mankind are placed are likewise entirely God's appointment. He is, then, the author of their nature, such

them into being not to enjoy, for against that he passed a decree which no power in earth or heaven can resist, but to suffer, through the ages of eternity, unremitted and intolerable anguish.

Were there in the nature of the Deity not the least portion of benevolence—instead of being, as it is, pure benignity, were it unmixed evil, it could not be worse for the great majority of his creatures, than, according to this terrible doctrine, it actually is. At present, indeed, they enjoy some degree of pleasure, but it is only sufficient, in the awful period of futurity, to carry their misery to the highest pitch, by enabling them to comprehend their eternal loss; and, accordingly, the bitterest anguish of the damned is usually represented as arising from recollections of the present state—recollections of happiness once participated with delight, but now departed for ever.

Were, then, the Deity, instead of being pure benevolence, malignant as malignity itself, and had he engaged in the work of creation on purpose to gratify his malevolent propensities, he could not, as far as we can see, have contrived a plan better calculated to effect his purpose, than that which this doctrine teaches he

as it is, when they commence the career of life, and of the circumstances which call their propensities into action. Both that nature and these circumstances are such, that the ultimate result could not possibly be otherwise than it is. “God’s decrees are the wise, free, and holy acts of the counsel of his will, whereby, from all eternity, he hath for his own glory, *unchangeably foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.*”—*Assembly’s Catechism*, quest. xii. He wills the propensity; he wills the means; and he so adapts the means to the propensity, and the propensity to the means, as inevitably to secure the end; and to affirm, therefore, that he does will the *end*, is utterly absurd.

actually has adopted with regard to the great majority of his creatures.

Can any person look into his own heart, and read the proofs which are registered there, of his most excellent and lovely character, without feeling disgust and horror at a doctrine which thus enshrouds him in the deep and awful gloom of cruelty and malevolence?

It is affirmed that there are passages of scripture which, in the most express and positive manner, assert the truth of this opinion, and others which imply it; this is not true. But there are, it must be admitted, passages which, to the English reader, may *seem* to favor it. These deserve serious and impartial examination. Let us bring to the investigation of them unprejudiced and candid minds, willing to ascertain the truth.

SECTION I.

OF THE TERM, EVERLASTING.

IN favor of the doctrine of Endless Misery, the following passages are quoted, and are generally deemed decisive:—Isaiah, xxxiii. 14, “The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?” Daniel, xii. 2, “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.” Matthew, xviii. 8, “Wherefore, if thy hand or thy foot cause thee to offend, cut them off, and cast them from thee. It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.” Matthew, xxv. 41, “Then shall he say also to them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Ver. 46, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.” Mark, iii. 29, “But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.” 2 Thesalonians, i. 7–9, “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that

obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Revelation, xiv. 11, "The smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever;" xix. 3, "The smoke goeth up for ever and ever;" xx. 10, "They (the beast and false prophet) shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." 2 Peter, ii. 17—Jude 13, "To whom the blackness of darkness is reserved for ever." Jude, 6, 7, "And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

These, I believe, are all the passages in the Bible, in which the terms everlasting and eternal are used in relation to future punishment; and it is obvious, that they are very few, compared with what is commonly supposed. From the frequency with which they are generally repeated, persons imagine that the Bible is full of expressions of this kind; yet they occur twice only in the Old Testament. In the gospel of Luke, they are not to be found, and they occur but once in that of Mark. St. John does not once employ them, either in his gospel or in his epistles, and they will be sought in vain in the account of the preaching of the apostles, in all their discourses which are upon record, from the beginning to the end of the Acts. Though the writings of the apostle Paul form so large a portion of the New Testament, yet he never uses any language

of this kind, except in one single instance, and then his expression is, *everlasting destruction*. Such words are no where to be found in the epistle of James, and they are totally absent from the epistles of Peter.

The truth of the doctrine cannot, however be supposed to depend upon the frequency with which it is repeated. One decisive proof is sufficient. The preceding facts are mentioned only to remove the common error, that the application of the terms everlasting and eternal to future punishment is of constant recurrence.

All the proof which the above passages can afford, in support of the endless duration of punishment, must depend upon the words *everlasting* and *eternal*, and presuppose that they denote duration without end; but in order to show this, it is necessary to prove, both that this is their primitive meaning, and that they are invariably used in this sense in scripture. That they do not primarily denote endless duration, seems evident from the fact, that they have a plural number. Had the primitive meaning of the substantive *aion* been eternity, and of the adjective *aionios*, endless, they could scarcely have possessed a plural signification, since it would have involved the same absurdity as is manifest when, attaching to the term eternity the sense which it always bears in the English language, we speak of eternities.

That these words are not *invariably* used in the scriptures to signify duration without end, is indisputable; yet they require to have this sense constantly and without exception, if their application to the subject of punishment be *alone* sufficient to prove its absolute eternity; for, if they ever denote limited duration, they *may* do so in regard to future punishment.

In order to ascertain the exact meaning of these terms, and the length of duration they signify, it is necessary to consider how they are used respecting other subjects in the New Testament, and in the Greek translation of the Old.

The word *aion* is used in scripture in several different senses. Sometimes it signifies the term of human life, at other times the duration of the world, and at others an age or dispensation of providence. In its plural form it denotes the age of the world, or any measurement of time, especially if its termination be hidden; but its most common signification is that of age or dispensation. It has this sense in the following passages:—

Matthew, xiii. 22, "He who received seed among thorns is he who heareth the word, and the anxious care," *tou aionos toutou*, of this æon, age, or world, &c. Ver. 39, "The harvest is the end," *tou aionos*, of the æon or age. Ver. 40, "So will it be in the end," *tou aionos toutou*, of this æon or age. Ver. 49, "So will it be in the end," *tou aionos*, of the æon or age. Matthew, xxviii. 20, "Lo, I am with you always to the end," *tou aionos*, of the æon or age.—Luke xvi. 8, "For the sons," *tou aionos toutou*, of this æon or age are more prudent.—Romans, xii. 2, "Be not conformed according," *to aioni touto*, to this æon or age.—Titus, ii. 12, "Live soberly, righteously, and piously," *en to nun aioni*, in this present æon or age, and also in the following passages: Matthew, xii. 33, Mark, iv. 19, Luke, xx. 34, 1 Corinthians, viii. 13—x. 11, Galatians, i. 4, 1 Timothy, vi. 17, 2 Timothy, iv. 10, Hebrews, ix. 26.

That the terms *aion* and *aionios* often signify *limited* duration, is evident from the following passages:—

Aion.

Exodus, xxi. 6, "Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall bring him to the door or the door-post, and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl, and he shall serve him, *eis ton aiona, for ever*;" that is, to the end of his life.

Ecclesiastes, i. 4, "One generation passeth away and another cometh; but the earth abideth, *eis ton aiona, for ever*," not surely to eternity, but from generation to generation.

John, viii. 35, "The slave abideth not in the house, *eis ton aiona, for ever*; the son abideth, *eis ton aiona, for ever*." In Exodus, xxi. 2, it is affirmed, that the slave was at liberty to leave his master's house at the expiration of the sixth year; in the text it is said that he abideth not with his master for ever, because he serves him for so short a period; and his temporary residence in the house is contrasted with that of the son, who is said to abide in it for ever, not because his continuance there will never end, but because he enjoys a residence with his father for an indefinite and comparatively long period. This passage shows, in a most striking manner, both the limited signification of this term, and the necessity of considering the subject to which it is applied, before we determine the length of duration it denotes.

John, xiv. 16, "The Father will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you, *eis ton aiona, for ever*; that is, as long as you live.

1 Corinthians, viii. 13, "If food cause my brother to offend, I will not eat flesh, *eis ton aiona, for ever*," during the whole course of my life.

To these the following passages may be added:—1 Samuel, iii. 13, Micah, iv. 7, Matthew, xxiv. 3, John, xiii. 8, Ephesians, ii. 7, Hebrews, vi. 5.

That this term must be understood in a limited sense, is likewise evident from the fact, that the writers of the New Testament continually speak of different æons, and represent one æon as succeeding another. This mode of expression occurs in several passages which have already been quoted, and it is used upwards of twenty times in the New Testament, in all which places the phrase, this æon, necessarily stands opposed to some other æon.

For example, Ephesians, i. 21, "Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only," *en aioni touto*, in this æon or age, *alla kai en to mellonti*, but also in that which is to come.—Matthew, xii. 32, "And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him," *oute en touto to aioni*, neither in this æon or age, *oute en to mellonti*, nor in that which is to come. Surely this cannot mean neither in this eternity nor in the eternity to come.

We also read of the *end* of the æon. Matthew, xxviii. 20, "Lo, I am with you always to the end," *tou aionos*, of the æon or age; not surely to the end of eternity. We even read of the end of the æons, and a period of time is spoken of prior to their commencement. Thus this word admits of the existence of time previous to the commencement of the age which it describes, and of an end to the periods which it speaks of as yet to come.

But what is absolutely decisive of its limited signifi-

cation, is the addition of *eti* and *epekeina* to it in the following places :

Exodus, xv. 18, "The Lord shall reign," *ton aiona, kai ep' aiona, kai eti, from æon to æon*, AND FURTHER.

Daniel, xii. 3, "And they that turn many to righteousness as the stars," *eistous aionas, kai eti, through the æons*, AND FURTHER.

Micah, iv. 5, "And we walk in the name of Jehovah our God," *eis ton aiona, kai epekeina, through the æon*, AND BEYOND IT.

A patient enquirer into the genuine meaning of the phraseology of scripture, and very accurate critic, the late Mr. Simpson, makes the following observations on this term :* "*Aion* occurs about a hundred times in the New Testament, in seventy of which, at least, it is clearly used for a limited duration. In the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, also, it is even *repeated*, and several times it is repeated *twice*, without meaning eternity, and in two instances signifies no longer a period than the life of one man only."

Aionios.

Genesis, ix. 16, "And I will look upon the bow that I may remember, *diatheken aionion, the everlasting covenant* between God and all flesh upon the earth;" yet the world itself will have an end, and therefore, though this bow is said to be the testimonial of an *everlasting* covenant, yet it can possess only a limited duration.

Genesis, xvii. 8, 13, 19, "And I will give unto thee and unto thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art

* Essay on the Duration of a Future State of Punishments and Rewards, p. 17.

a stranger, all the land of Canaan, *eis kataschesin aionion*, for an everlasting possession. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised; and my covenant shall be in your flesh, *eis diatheken aionion*, for an everlasting covenant."

In this passage the land of Canaan is called an *everlasting* possession, and the covenant of circumcision an *everlasting* covenant; yet the land of Canaan will not exist through endless ages, and the covenant of circumcision is declared in the New Testament to be already annulled.

Numbers, xxv. 13, "He shall have it and his seed after him, even an everlasting covenant of priesthood," *diatheke aionia*, yet the genealogy of Phineas and Aaron cannot now be traced.

Philemon, 15, "He therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldst receive him, *aionion*, for ever," that is, for his whole life only.

Exodus, xl. 15, "And thou shalt anoint them as thou didst anoint their father, that they may minister unto me in the priests' office; *for their anointing shall SURELY be an EVERLASTING PRIESTHOOD.*" Compare this with Hebrews, vii., 12, "FOR THE PRIESTHOOD BEING CHANGED, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." Ver. 18, "For there is verily A DIS-ANNULLING of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness of it."

In the first of these passages it is affirmed, that Aaron's sons shall be established in an everlasting priesthood, and that the covenant made with them shall be without end; in the second it is declared, that this everlasting priesthood is changed, and this ever-

lasting ordinance is now no more. Here, then, we have the express authority of scripture, for saying that an everlasting priesthood has come to an end, and that an everlasting covenant is disannulled.

Had the words which are here applied to the duration of Aaron's priesthood been annexed to that of future punishment, how impossible would it have been deemed, by many persons, to answer the argument it would have furnished in support of its endless duration! What stress would have been laid upon the word *surely*, and how often should we have heard it repeated in reply to every thing which might be advanced on the subject; yet we have the authority of the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, for affirming that the argument would have been totally fallacious!

Since, then, we read of the everlasting, or æonian circumcising, and of the everlasting or æonian priesthood, it is evident, that the term must have a limited signification; for we cannot possibly suppose these things to be endless, merely because they are said to be of æonian duration. The æon or age to which they related is gone; the æonian covenants and statutes are waxed old, and have disappeared, and Jesus Christ has introduced a new æon; but if we render the word *permanent*, *continual*, or *lasting*, we shall be able to attach a scriptural and consistent meaning to it in every passage in which it occurs. Thus we shall have a just conception of the continual covenants of circumcision and priesthood, which continued during the Jewish æon or age—of the continual hills, which will continue during the æon or age of the world—of the continual gospel, which will be preached during the æons or ages in which the Mediator is subjecting all things to him-

self, and reconciling them to the Father—and of continual punishment, which will be inflicted until the wise, necessary, and benevolent purposes of punishment are accomplished.

The same kind of observations may be applied to the phrases, *for ever*, and *for ever and ever*. *Eis aiona aionos*, *for ever*, is used to denote a limited period of duration in the following passages:

Psalms, xxxvii. 29, "The righteous shall dwell in the land *for ever*;" that is, from generation to generation.—Psalms, lxi. 8, "I will sing praise to thy name *for ever*," from one period of my life to another. Psalm, cxxxii. 14, "This is my rest *for ever*;" that is, from age to age.*

Eis ton aiona kai eis ton aiona tou aionos, *for ever and ever*, is employed to express limited duration in the following texts:

"Psalms, xlvii. 14, 'This God is our God *for ever and ever*;' that is, from age to age, for he has long ceased to be the God of the Jews in the sense here intended.—Psalms cxix. 44, 'So shall I keep thy law continually, *for ever and ever*;' that is, through the several periods or ages of my life on earth.'—Psalms, cxlv. 2, 'I will praise thy name *for ever and ever*;' that is through every period of my life.—Psalms, cxlv. 21, 'Let all the flesh bless his holy name *for ever and ever*;' that is, from age to age, or through every age.—Psalms, cxlviii. 6, 'He hath established the heavens *for ever and ever*;' that is, through all ages."*

"It is an observation of the utmost importance, that when *aion* or *aionios* are applied to the future punishment of the wicked, they are never joined to life, im-

* See Simpson's Essay, pp. 17, 18.

mortality, incorruptibility, but are always connected with fire, or with that punishment, pain, destruction, or second death, which is effected by means of fire. Now, since fire, which consumes or decomposes other perishable bodies, is itself of a dissoluble or perishing nature, this intimates a limitation of the period of time.”*

It is probable, also, that one chief reason why the future punishment of the wicked is often denoted by the metaphor of fire, is because it was the agent which was generally employed in *purifying* other bodies.† Allusions are continually made in scripture to this property of fire. Malachi, iii. 2, 3, “But who may abide the day of his coming, and shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap; and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.”—Isaiah, xlviii. 10, “Behold, I have refined thee. I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.”—Mark, ix. 49, “For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.” In this passage, which itself relates to future punishment, the double metaphor of salt and fire appears to be used to signify the same thing, the corrective nature of punishment. 1 Peter, i. 7, “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto

* See Simpson’s Essay, p. 22.

† It is true this metaphor is very frequently used to signify indignation and anger, as in Revelations, xiv. 10, and Hebrews, x. 27; but the passages quoted above prove that it is also employed to denote the corrective nature of punishment.

praise and honor and glory, at the appearance of Jesus Christ." Allusion to this property of fire, is also made in the following passages: Psalms, xii. 6, "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." Matthew, iii. 11, 12, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire; whose fan is in hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner: but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." The parallel passage in Luke, iii. 17.—Revelations, iii. 18, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear."

It appears, then, that, since the terms *aion* and *aionios* are constantly applied to things which either have perished, or which must be destroyed, no argument can fairly be deduced from their use alone, in proof of the absolute eternity of future punishment, even although it should be allowed that some passages in which they occur denote duration without end.* Before their application to *this* subject can be conclusive, it must be shown, that there is something in the

* That they are sometimes *connected with subjects* which have an endless duration, must be admitted; for example, in some passages which relate to the glory of God—Romans, xvi. 27, "To the only wise God be glory, *eis tous aionas, for ever*."—1 Peter, iv. 11, "That by Jesus Christ God may be glorified, to whom be glory and dominion, *eis tous aionas ton aionon, for ever and ever*."—1 Timothy, vi. 16, "To him who only hath immortality, be honor and dominion, *aionion, everlasting*"—and in some passages which relate to the nature of the Divine Being, Romans, xvi. 26, "According to the commandment, *tou aicniou Theou, of the everlasting God*." But it is evident, that in these passages these words do not give the sense of endless to, but receive it from, the subject to which they are applied.

nature of punishment which requires, that, whenever they are annexed to it, they must necessarily denote endless duration—a task which it is not easy to accomplish, and the very attempt at which seems absurd; but, even if it could be accomplished, it would prove, not that the nature of these terms gives the sense of eternity to punishment, but that the nature of punishment, imparts it to these terms.

This foundation, then, of the doctrine of Endless Misery, and of Limited Punishment terminated by destruction, is unstable and insufficient. These terms cannot establish the doctrine, that future punishment will be followed by a total extinction of conscious existence, because the only way in which they could favor this opinion would be by proving that the *loss* sustained by the wicked is truly everlasting, and that in this most important sense their punishment may be said to be without end; but it has been shown, that these words do not prove the endless duration of punishment. Still less do they favor the doctrine of Endless Misery; for, although the absolute eternity of punishment were fully established, it would by no means follow, that this punishment consists of unre-mitted and insupportable torments, because the substantive connected with the adjective which is translated eternal, does not signify misery, but punishment. It is not said that the wicked shall go away into everlasting torment; and, though the term everlasting is connected with the metaphor of fire, yet this metaphor may signify something else besides *misery*, as has already been shown; and, at all events, to attempt to establish such a tremendous doctrine, merely upon a figurative expression, is unwarrantable.

But, though this word, when applied to future punishment, does not denote duration without end, yet it is expressive of a period, to the length of which we can set no limits, and which no thoughtful mind can contemplate without dismay. To the impenitent and obdurate sinner, who, in the midst of light and knowledge, with clear conceptions of his duty, and strong convictions of his obligations to obey it, has lived without God in the world, violated the laws of morality and religion, outraged the best affections of the heart, and trampled on the dearest interests of mankind, there must be a day of awful retribution. Though we cannot conceive more nobly of the Deity, than to suppose that benignity constitutes the essence of his nature, yet from this very circumstance, he must punish the wicked with a necessary degree of severity. They carry in their own breast the sentence of condemnation; they feel within themselves a terrible consciousness, that they must suffer the just judgment of their crimes, and the dictate of their heart is the voice of God, announcing to them their future destiny. They cannot be happy. Were a seat prepared for them at the right hand of God, were angels and archangels, and the spirits of the just made perfect, to encircle them, and were the most rapturous joys of heaven offered to their acceptance, they would still be wretched. The very bosom of enjoyment would be to them a thorny pillow; for the turbulence of malignant passion would even there disturb their repose. Like those miserable pageants of grandeur, who live in gorgeous palaces, and whom mirth and joy encircle, while some foul crime weighs heavy on their conscience, the paleness of whose cheek the surrounding splendor does but deepen, and

whose quivering lip moves but the more tremulously for the pleasure which invites their participation—anguish and despair are in their hearts.

Every fault we commit *must* involve us in suffering. Misconduct and misery are connected together by a law as steady and invariable in its operation as that which regulates the motions of the planets. If we die without having acquired virtuous and pious habits, and with hearts attached to criminal pleasures, there is no alternative ; we must necessarily suffer an anguish, which both reason and revelation assure us must in every case be dreadful, but the degree and the duration of which can be determined only by the nature, the number, and the aggravation of our sins.

With an evidence which no reasonable mind can resist, and with deep and impressive solemnity, the scriptures assure us, that after death cometh the judgment—that all mankind must appear before the tribunal of Jesus Christ—that they must be judged according to the deeds done in the body, whether they have been good or evil—that the virtuous of every nation, kindred, people, and religion, shall be admitted to a state of pure and exalted happiness, where all their faculties shall be enlarged, where every object calculated to exercise and satisfy them shall abound, where every natural and moral imperfection, and therefore every painful sensation, shall be for ever excluded, and where, existing in immortal vigor, they shall be continually rising higher and higher in the scale of excellence and enjoyment, till they attain a measure of both, which at present we can neither calculate nor comprehend. But they assure us, too, that the wicked shall be doomed to a state of suffering, awful in its na

ture, and lasting in its duration—that they shall be excluded from the habitations of the just—that between them and the virtuous a great gulf shall be fixed—that no song of joy shall be heard in these regions of remorse—that weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, shall be there, and that the recollection of the sins they have committed, the mercies they have abused, and the privileges they have lost, shall fill them with intolerable anguish.

The doctrine of Universal Restoration not only teaches these solemn and momentous truths, but inculcates them in a manner the best adapted to convince the understanding, and to affect the heart. It is not this doctrine, therefore, which cries to those who are at ease in Zion, “Peace, peace, where there is no peace;” it is not this doctrine which says to the wicked, “Ye shall not surely die”—which relaxes the ties of moral obligation, or promises an exemption from punishment, whatever dispositions are indulged, or whatever crimes are committed.

With a solemnity peculiar to itself, it assures the wicked that they can enjoy no rest—that they must be miserable as long as they are criminal; and, if there be anything affecting in tenderness, or persuasive in benignity, that doctrine must have a peculiarly moral tendency, which inculcates, that the suffering they endure will induce an abhorrence of its cause, and that purified from sin, repentant and reclaimed, in love with holiness and goodness, and looking with humble, penitent, and supplicating hearts, to the Father of mercies, for forgiveness, he will have compassion upon them, speak to them the words of peace, and take them to his bosom as his children—that even as a father pitieth his

children, so the Lord will have compassion upon them that fear him, knowing their frame, and remembering that they are but dust.

“I have taken no pleasure in your suffering,” may we conceive our heavenly Father to say to his penitent children, when the discipline under which he will place them shall have accomplished its design. “I have chastised you only with a view to correct the evil which was in you. You feel and deplore your error. You are fitted to partake of true happiness. Come, then, for there is room; ‘This, my son, was dead and is alive, was lost and is found!’”

If at that moment this reclaimed child should have the feelings of a man, and testify in human language the sensations of his soul, will he not fall down before this most lovely Being, and, in a rapture of adoring gratitude, exclaim, “Thy wisdom and thy goodness have prevailed. With penitence I return unto thee, from whom I ought never to have departed. Father, receive thy child. The eternity of happiness thou givest me shall speak thy praise.”

What a memorable and affecting spectacle must such a reconciliation afford to the whole rational creation! How great must be its moral influence! How much better must it answer all the purposes of justice, as well as benevolence, than the condemnation of millions of millions of rational beings to a total loss of conscious existence, or to the endurance of the most excruciating torments, which can accomplish no possible end, except that of sinking the unhappy victims deeper and deeper in sin and misery! Which spectacle is most worthy of the God of love, and in which is most apparent the finger of infinite wisdom, power, and benevolence?

SECTION II.

OF THE APPLICATION OF THE SAME WORD TO THE
HAPPINESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS, AND THE PUNISH-
MENT OF THE WICKED.

SINCE it is evident that the terms eternal, everlasting, for ever and ever, denote a limited duration, and therefore that their application to future punishment cannot prove its absolute eternity, it is further urged, in support of the doctrines of Endless Misery, and of Limited Punishment terminated by destruction, that the same word is applied both to the happiness of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked, and that, as in the one case this term is always supposed to convey the idea of happiness without end, so in the other it must, in all fair and reasonable construction, be allowed to denote endless loss or suffering.

The proper and full reply to this objection is, that the application of *aionios*, to the happiness of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked, cannot of itself prove the absolute eternity of either. If the endless duration of the happiness of the righteous be established beyond doubt, the proof is derived from other sources, and does not depend upon this term.

The passage on which the present objection is chiefly founded, occurs in Matthew, xxv. 46: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Although the same word is here

employed to express the duration both of future reward and punishment, yet the difference between the nature of the two subjects, the difference between the substantives to which the adjective is applied, and the clear testimony of other passages of scripture, which relate to the final destiny of mankind, all concur to show, that in the former case it signifies an endless, and in the latter a limited, duration.

There is the greatest possible difference between the nature of the subjects to which the term is applied. When an everlasting life of happiness is promised to the righteous, the subject naturally leads us to believe that its duration will be without end, because we can conceive of nothing which should bring it to a termination. There is every reason to believe that the same motive which induced the Deity to impart it for a very protracted period, will lead him to render it endless. The happiness of which the pious will be in possession in a future state, is the attainment of the object for which they were created—the completion of the design of their existence. As long as they continue to enjoy, they promote the benevolent purpose of their Creator, and therefore their felicity has in itself the promise of immortality. Happiness, too, is an eternal principle; it is coeval with the Deity, and will be lasting as himself. But misery is in every respect the reverse. It is not the object for which mankind were brought into being; its prevalence is not the fulfilment of the designs of the Deity. As long as it exists, his purposes cannot be completed. It is not itself an end; it is only the means to an end, which alone is sufficient to prove that it cannot be eternal, but must cease as soon as it has accomplished its allotted work. There is, therefore,

such a difference between the nature of happiness and misery, as necessarily leads to the conclusion, that their duration will be different. The term, *aionios*, applied to the first, *derives from it* the signification of endless duration; applied to the second, it is *restricted* by it to a limited period.

There is an equal difference between the nature of the substantives to which this word is applied. Thus, in this very passage, when it relates to the righteous, it is connected with *zoe*, a substantive which signifies life; when it respects the wicked, it is joined with *kolasis*, a term which invariably denotes *corrective* punishment.* That the phrase, everlasting, or continual life, when applied to the pious, may signify an immortal existence, it is reasonable to believe, because the nature of the subject countenances the opinion, and it is favored by many passages of scripture. That the expression, everlasting punishment, or lasting correction, when applied to the wicked, denotes a limited punishment, it is impossible to deny, because a corrective cannot be an endless punishment—because the very hypothesis is incompatible with the design of the divine government—because it is contrary to the general tenor of the New Testament, and because it deprives many of its most striking and animating expressions of all their beauty and truth.

* “The word here rendered punishment, properly signifies correction for the benefit of the offender; and the word translated everlasting, is often used to express a long, but indefinite duration. This text, therefore, so far from giving countenance to the harsh doctrine of eternal misery, is rather favorable to the more pleasing and more probable hypothesis of the ultimate restitution of the wicked to virtue and to happiness.”—*Improved Version*, note in loc.

Nor does the affixing of a different meaning to the same word, occurring twice in the same sentence, afford any objection to this interpretation. The difference in the subject in the one case and the other is so manifest, as clearly to point out its different signification; so that, if the scriptures afforded no example of a similar repetition of the same word in a twofold sense, it ought not to induce the least doubt of the validity of the principle upon which the distinction in the present passage is established. But the fact is, that there are several places in which the same word is applied twice in the same sentence, with a dissimilarity as to the extent of duration denoted by it, exactly similar to this. For example,

Habakkuk, iii. 6, "And the *everlasting* mountains were scattered, and the perpetual hills did bow; his ways are *everlasting*." In this passage, the same word is applied to the duration of mountains, and to the duration of the ways of God. In the latter part of the sentence it signifies absolute eternity; in the former it must denote limited duration. This passage affords another striking illustration of the principle, that it is the nature of the subject, in relation to which the term *aionios* is used, that determines the length of duration it must be understood to denote. When it relates to the Deity, it derives from his nature the sense of absolute eternity; when it expresses the duration of mountains, it is restricted by their nature to a limited signification.

Romans, xvi. 25, 26, "According to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret, *chronois aioniois*, in the times of the ages, but has now been made manifest, according to the commandment, *tou aioniou Theou*,

of the everlasting God."—Titus, i. 2, "In hope, *zoes aioniou*, of *eternal* life, which God, who cannot lie, promised," *pro chronon aionion*, *before the times of the ages*, or *before the world began*, or *before the ancient dispensations*.

These examples are abundantly sufficient to prove, that the argument in support of the endless duration of punishment, founded upon *this* application of the term, is also fallacious.

SECTION III.

OF THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF ENDLESS MISERY,
DERIVED FROM THE PHRASE, UNQUENCHABLE FIRE.

THE following passages have been deemed decisive proofs of the endless duration of the misery of the wicked :—

Matthew, xxv. 41, “Depart from me, ye cursed, *eis to pur to aionion*, into eternal or lasting fire.”—Jude, 7, “As Sodom and Gomorrha are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance, *puros aioniou*, of eternal fire.” This fire has been extinguished long ago.—Matthew, iii. 12, “But he will burn the chaff, *puri asbesto*, with unquenchable fire.”—Mark, ix. 43–49, “And if thy hand cause thee to offend, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, *into the fire that never shall be quenched*, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot cause thee to offend, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, *into the fire that never shall be quenched*. And if thine eye cause thee to offend, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire, *where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*; for every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.”

It is argued, that our Lord in this passage repeats five times, that the fire into which the wicked are cast shall never be quenched—that three times he speaks of hell, as a place where the worm dieth not, and that, still further to show the perpetuity of the sufferings of the wicked, he adds, “for every one shall be salted with fire.” As it is the property of salt to preserve, it is argued, that the inference justly deducible from this awful intimation is, that this fire, while it torments its unhappy victims, shall not put a period to their existence, but, contrary to its natural effect, continue them in being.

A careful examination of this passage will show that this argument is founded upon a false interpretation of the metaphors which are here employed, and that it is altogether fallacious. Jesus speaks of the wicked as being cast into the valley of Hinnom, into the unquenchable fire, where the worm dieth not. Yet “in the valley of Hinnom the worm died when its food failed, and the pile on which human sacrifices were burnt to Moloch was often extinguished.”—*Newcome*.

“These emblematical images, expressing hell, were in use among the Jews before our Saviour’s time. The son of Sirach says, vii. 7, ‘The vengeance of the ungodly is fire and worms.’—Judith, xvi. 17, ‘The Lord will take vengeance on the nations, &c., in the day of judgment, in putting fire and worms in their flesh.’” —*Lowth’s Note on Isaiah*, lxvi. 24.

When it is said that every one shall be salted with fire, or every sacrifice is salted with salt, this is to be understood, “not literally, as the law requires, Leviticus, ii. 13, but figuratively, with the salt of divine assistance and instruction. Salt, being a preservative

of food from hasty corruption, was among the Jews an emblem of virtue and knowledge, by which the mind is purified. Colossians, iv. 6, 'Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt.'"—*Newcome*.

That the phrase, *unquenchable fire*, upon which so much stress is always laid, in the argument for Endless Misery, does not denote a fire which shall never cease, is most certain. The following passages afford irresistible evidence, that it is constantly used in the scriptures in a limited sense:—

Jeremiah, xvii. 27, "But if ye will not hearken unto me, to hallow the Sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, *then will I kindle fire in the gates thereof*, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, AND IT SHALL NOT BE QUENCHED." Yet the same prophet predicts that Jerusalem shall be rebuilt, chap. xxx. 18, &c.

Ezekiel, xx. 45–48, "Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face towards the south, and say to the forest of the south, Hear the word of the Lord. Behold, I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree, THE FLAMING FLAME SHALL NOT BE QUENCHED, and all faces from the south to the north shall be burned therein, and all flesh shall see that I the Lord have kindled it; IT SHALL NOT BE QUENCHED."

If it be supposed, that these menaces were actually executed upon Jerusalem, and that, when this devoted city was destroyed, the prophecy was literally accomplished, it must be admitted, that the fire which consumed it is already extinguished, and that, therefore,

the scriptural meaning of an unquenchable fire is not one which has no termination. If these dreadful threatenings be more justly considered as figurative, it must be allowed, that they express the divine displeasure, and the severity of the punishment which is inflicted on the disobedient, but not that they determine anything relative to its duration.

Isaiah, xxxiv. 9-11, "And the streams thereof (of the land of Idumea) shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. IT SHALL NOT BE QUENCHED NIGHT NOR DAY; *the smoke thereof shall go up for ever*; from generation to generation it shall be waste; none shall pass through it *for ever*. But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it: the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it: and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stone of emptiness."

No fire with which the wicked are threatened is expressed in language so strong as this; yet it is obvious, that this phraseology cannot denote a fire which shall never end; for, if any one can believe that Idumea was really turned into pitch and brimstone, and set on fire, yet it is impossible to suppose that it will continue burning through the ages of eternity; and, if the denunciation be interpreted in a figurative sense, the calamities it threatens must be understood to be of a temporal nature, and therefore of limited duration.

Simpson concludes his examination of the term *pur*, fire, in general, and of these passages in particular, with the following admirable observations:

"All these several metaphors, by which future punishment is described, will not admit of being understood literally; for, if thus interpreted, some of them

would clash with others. Nor is there any proper authority for taking any *one* of them in preference to the rest, and explaining them so as to accord with that which we select as the rule of interpretation. We are compelled, therefore, to look out for some key to the explanation of them all, so as to be consistent with each other. If any one of these figurative representations has united with it a plain term, that will accord not only with the single figure with which it is conjoined, but also with the various other figures that are employed upon this subject in the New Testament, and especially if it coincides with the actual explanation and use of the very same figures in the writings of the Jewish prophets, we may fairly interpret all the figurative expressions by this plain one.

“Now the words *anger* and *indignation*, that occur in Revelation, xiv. 10; Hebrews, x. 27, have a plain and distinct meaning. ‘The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation, and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.’ All the other terms that are employed to describe the grievous future punishment of the wicked, are proper figurative representations of the dreadful effects of divine indignation against sinners; and, considered in this light, they entirely agree with each other. The Old Testament was both the religious and the civil code of the Jews, and the Greek translation of it was commonly used by them in the time of our Lord and his apostles. They therefore adopted many expressions from the books contained in it. Now the Jewish prophets, it is well known, described the Deity him-

self and all his operations and proceedings, in a bold and most highly figurative style. The similitudes which we are now considering, they often employed in representing the great displeasure of the Most High against sin, and the painful chastisement of death, that he will inflict *in this world*, upon those who transgress his laws and abuse his favors. The metaphors of fire, unquenchable fire, and their worm not dying, as well as other figures, are thus applied in the following text, in which there are plain expressions, that lead to the true interpretation of the figurative :

“Deuteronomy, xxxii. 22–25, ‘A fire is kindled in mine *anger*, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischiefs upon them : I will spend mine arrows upon them : they shall be burnt with hunger and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction ; I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust ; the sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs.’ Isaiah, lxvi. 14–16, ‘The *indignation* of Jehovah shall be known towards his enemies. For behold, Jehovah will come with his fire and with his chariots, like a whirlwind, to render his *anger* with fury, and his rebuke like flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will Jehovah plead with all flesh, and the slain of the Lord shall be many.’ Verse 24, ‘And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me : *for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched*, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.’ Here dead carcasses are

spoken of, as being devoured by worms, or destroyed by fire. This, therefore, does not imply, but excludes the idea of their feeling pain. See also, Isaiah, v. 24, 25, xxx. 27-33, Psalms, lxxxix. 46, &c.

“From the above quotations out of the Old Testament, it appears that the metaphors in the New Testament, which we are considering, must, in the strongest sense, be understood of grievous suffering and destruction by death. The wicked, then, are described as dying again after severe punishment in the world to come. There is no passage in which it is said that they shall be immortal, or remain in a state of torment without dying. We have no sufficient ground, then, for maintaining that the punishment of sinners will have no termination, nor for affirming that the second death, which we are assured they shall undergo, will put a final period to their existence. These are conclusions upon which consequences of too great moment depend, to admit of their being deduced from figurative language alone. Plain and explicit terms seem indispensably requisite to justify such sentiments.”

SECTION IV.

OF THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF ENDLESS MISERY, FOUNDED ON THE CASE OF JUDAS.

THE language of our Lord, respecting the unhappy person who betrayed him, has been supposed to furnish a strong argument in support of the endless misery of the wicked. "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed. It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."—Matthew, xxvi. 24.

Should a period ever arrive, when Judas will be restored to happiness, our Lord, it is argued, could not with truth have affirmed, that it would have been good for him if he had not been born; because, though the suffering inflicted on him be ever so severe and protracted, if it be the means of correcting his evil disposition, and preparing him for immortal felicity, his existence must upon the whole be an incalculable blessing.

To this it is common to reply, and the answer is abundantly sufficient, that the language of our Lord is proverbial, and that no sober mind will venture to rest such a tremendous doctrine upon the solitary use of a Jewish proverb. The phrase is often used proverbially, both by sacred and profane authors. Simpson observes, that it is often found in the Talmudical writers. See

Wolffius' and *Lightfoot's Note on Matthew*, xxvi. 24; also *Grotius in loco, et Alberti Observ. Philologicæ*, &c., who produce several instances of similar modes of expression. To the truth of these observations, Dr. Gill, who was certainly in no degree hostile to the doctrine of endless misery, or to any other orthodox opinion, bears his decided testimony. In his notes on this and the parallel passage in Mark, he says, "This is a Rabbinical phrase, frequently used in one form or other, and sometimes as our Lord spake it. It is applied to such as speak false and lying words, and regard not the glory of their Creator."*

That this kind of language was common among the Jews, we have abundant proof in several parts of scripture. Job, in the anguish of his heart, exclaims, "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night wherein it was said, There is a man child conceived, Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it, because it shut not up the doors of my mother's womb, nor hid sorrow from mine eyes. Why died I not from the womb? Then should I have been still and quiet. I should have slept."—Job, iii. 3.

Jeremiah uses, if possible, still more strong and bitter language. Jeremiah, xiv. 14–18,† "Cursed be the day wherein I was born. Let not the day wherein my mother bore me be blessed. Cursed be the man that brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee, making him very glad. Let that

* The improved version gives, as a conjectural meaning of this phrase, "It would have been good for him, (the traitor,) if that man (the Son of man) had never been born."—See note in loc.

† See Blaney's note on this passage.

man be as the cities which Jehovah overthrew and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning and the shouting at noon-tide, because he slew me not from the womb, or that my mother might have been my grave. Wherefore came I out of the womb to see labor and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?"

If, then, Job could use such language, while enduring suffering, which was indeed very severe, but which was only of a temporal nature, and which cannot be supposed to have arisen in any degree from the apprehension of endless misery, and if Jeremiah could adopt it for no other reason, than because he suffered a little disgrace in a good cause, with how much greater justice, and with what solemn and impressive energy might our Lord apply it to Judas, whose crime was of so deep a dye, and whose punishment must necessarily be so great! Being acquainted with the Jewish scriptures, and accustomed to this kind of language, his hearers must often have heard similar expressions applied to persons whose sufferings were trifling compared with those of the traitor.

SECTION V.

OF THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF ENDLESS MISERY,
DERIVED FROM THE LANGUAGE WHICH IS USED
CONCERNING THE SIN AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST.

“WHEREFORE all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.”—Matthew, xii. 31, 32.

This passage has been supposed to afford a decisive argument in support of the endless duration of the punishment of the wicked; but, if this be the case, the proof must depend either upon the phrase, “Whosoever speaketh a word against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him,” or upon that which immediately follows, “neither in this world nor the world to come.”

With regard to the first, it may be admitted, that this dreadful threatening will be executed to the very letter, and yet the concession will afford no proof of the endless duration of punishment. Whoever is guilty of this sin may not be forgiven; he may suffer all the punishment due to his crime; that punishment may be protracted and terrible, and yet it may not be endless, because it is one thing for punishment to be great and

durable, and another to be without end. The reasoning which is founded upon this text, instead of establishing any thing, assumes the point in dispute. The passage is adduced to show that the punishment inflicted upon unpardoned sin is endless; yet all which it affirms, taken literally, and in its largest sense, is, that there is one sin which will not be forgiven; so that the precise thing to be proved, namely, that unpardoned sin will be punished with endless suffering, is taken for granted.

The phrase, "neither in this age nor the age to come," is so far from denoting endless duration, that it is itself a decisive proof that expressions of this kind do not signify proper eternity; for, if the contrary be maintained, the correct rendering of this passage must be, neither in this eternity, nor in the eternity to come.

The language of our Lord in this text, refers, without doubt, to the conduct of the Pharisees, who, when they could not deny the reality of his miracles, attributed the power by which he performed them, not to God, but to the agency of evil beings. He appeals to his works as a proof that he is come forth from God; but he is assisted by a very different being, say they: "He casteth out demons by Beelzebub the prince of the demons." Nothing could discover more shocking malignity. Now, says our Lord, every kind of calumny is a crime of great enormity, and pardoned by God with the utmost difficulty; but to speak evil of God himself, by attributing his beneficent and miraculous works to a wicked being, is an offence of the deepest dye, and much more difficult to be pardoned. This appears to be what our Lord affirms, and all which he affirms in this passage.

If this be a just interpretation of these words, they afford an example of a mode of expression which is very frequently employed by the Hebrews, and of which we have several instances in the scriptures. When they would say that one thing is more excellent, easy, or difficult, than another, they often positively affirm the one and deny the other. In this manner God is represented, Matthew, ix. 13, as saying, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice;" meaning by this, not that sacrifices were in themselves disagreeable to him, but that acts of beneficence were more excellent and acceptable. So Matthew, chap. v. 18, says, "Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall by no means pass away from the law, till all be accomplished," which Luke explains, chap. xvi. 17, by saying, "*It is easier* for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the law to fail." In the same manner, Christ, in the text, seems to say, that every other kind of evil speaking may be forgiven, but that to speak evil of God or his spirit shall not be pardoned; when no more is intended, than that it is more difficult to obtain the forgiveness of the one offence than of the other.*

There are other expositors, however, who plead for understanding these words literally, and suppose them to declare, that, to speak evil of the Spirit of God, in the manner before mentioned, is an unpardonable offence, either because the persons who are guilty of it, rejecting the evidence of miracles, resist the strongest motive to repentance which God can give, or because the crime is of too enormous a nature to come within the reach of divine mercy. But it does not seem prob-

* See Kenrick's Exposition of the Historical Writings of the New Testament, note in loc.

able in itself, that any sin, committed by creatures of such limited capacities as we are, can be so heinous as to leave no hope of pardon, when sincerely repented of; nor does it appear that our Lord himself thought it impossible for the divine clemency to be extended to it; for, when he was put to death by the Pharisees, who had been guilty of this offence, he prays that God would forgive them; to which it may be added, that a few verses before we find these Pharisees ask for a sign, and Christ tells them that one shall be given them, even that of the prophet Jonas; but why should their request be granted, except for their conviction, that they might obtain forgiveness? *

The preceding observations are founded on the remark of Grotius on this passage, who says: "Our Lord could not mean in the former part of the sentence, in which he speaks of other sins and blasphemies, to affirm absolutely, that they shall be forgiven without repentance, because this is not true; for many of them, we are told, will not be forgiven, but will incur their due punishment. Therefore this is a Hebrew form of speech, signifying that all other sins and blasphemies shall *sooner* be forgiven than the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. For it was common among the Jews to say, This thing shall be, and This shall not be, merely to express the greater difficulty of effecting the latter than the former, without affirming anything absolutely of either."

Whitby seems to think that the sin against the Holy Spirit probably refers to blaspheming the Spirit which fell on the apostles at the day of Pentecost, (see Appendix to Matthew, xii.,) with whom Doddridge on

* See Kenrick, in loc.

Matthew, xii. 31, 32, agrees. If this opinion be well founded, it cannot be said that this sin shall not be forgiven, because those who had committed it were exhorted to repent, that they might obtain pardon. Acts, ii. 13, 38, viii. 17-24.*

It is obvious, that the sin against the Holy Ghost consists in a wilful and obstinate ascription of the miraculous powers of Jesus Christ to demoniacal agency. "Verily," says our Lord, Mark, iii. 28, "all sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation; *because they said he had an unclean spirit.*"—Matthew, xii. 24, "This man doth not cast out demons, but by Beelzebub the prince of the demons." These last words place the matter beyond doubt.

He who, when he saw the miracles of Jesus, and could not resist the conviction that they were real, refused to yield to his authority, but attributed his works to the agency of demons, rejected the strongest possible evidence of the truth of his religion.† Refusing to profit by the best means which the wisdom of the Deity had devised to make him pure and happy, there was every reason to believe that he must leave this world utterly unprepared for the next, and suffer the

* See Simpson's Essay on Future Punishment, p. 80.

† "They who ascribed the miracles of Jesus and his apostles to demoniacal agency, resisted the strongest possible evidence of the truth of the Christian religion, and were therefore incapable of being converted to the belief of it."—*Improved version, in loc.*—See, also, Dr. Samuel Clarke's paraphrase of this passage, and Macknight, in loc.

penalty of unrepentant guilt, which will be the more dreadful, in that his eyes will be opened to all the enormity of his crime. This, indeed, will form a dreadful aggravation of the misery of the wicked in the state of punishment. At present, the mind has a wonderful power of changing at will the appearances of objects, so that it can bring itself to view even the most horrible crimes, not only without disgust, but with pleasure; but, in the state of discipline in which the Parent of mankind will hereafter place his offending offspring, this deceptive power will not be permitted to be exercised. The vail will be torn from every eye, and all objects will appear in their real colors. Then, it will not be Nero reflecting upon his crimes with the blunted feelings of the man who could cause hundreds of innocent beings to be wrapt in shirts of pitch, and, setting them on fire, mingle in the crowd of flaming victims, that he might have a nearer view of their anguish; but it will be Nero contemplating his wanton cruelty with the sensibility of Howard—with the just valuation of goodness of the apostle Paul. Is it possible to believe, that this altered view and feeling will produce no beneficial effect—will excite no abhorrence of sin, no desire to burst from its thralldom and be free, or that, exciting such a dislike and wish, they will be for ever unavailing?

The degree and the duration of punishment necessary to produce the salutary change must be different in different persons. The exact proportion it is the part of Infinite Wisdom to determine. No more than is requisite will be inflicted. As much as is necessary must be sustained. Some must be beaten with few, and others with many stripes; and we learn, from the

passage we have been considering, that there is in the sin against the Holy Ghost a malignity which will render its eradication more difficult than that of any other crime. In the language which is used concerning it, there is much that is awful and affecting, but nothing that is impossible or irrational; and it is not for us by giving a false interpretation of it, to render it both.

SECTION VI.

OF THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF ENDLESS MISERY,
DEDUCED FROM THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT
GULPH.

THE parable of Lazarus and the rich man has often been adduced in proof of the endless misery of the wicked. It is necessary, therefore, to notice it, though no intelligent person can lay much stress upon it. Abraham is represented as saying to the rich man, Luke, xvi. 26, "Between us and you there is a great gulph fixed, so that they which would pass from thence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence."

All which this passage proves is, that the righteous and the wicked will be placed in different states, and that the one cannot pass to that of the other. Respecting the duration of these states, it determines nothing.

Indeed, the circumstances mentioned in the parable are favorable to the opinion, that future punishment will be corrective. The rich man is represented as enjoying many privileges which he abused. He had great wealth, but, like too many who are entrusted with this means of diffusing happiness, he possessed an unfeeling heart. There is no scriptural authority for representing him as utterly profligate and abandoned ;

and to give such an exhibition of his character is to pervert the design of this most instructive lesson, which is to admonish us, not that a monster of wickedness shall be punished in the other world, but that the man who, though not chargeable with doing much ill, does little or no good, and lives, though not perhaps an intemperate, a sensual life — who, careless about the situation of others, exists only for the indulgence of his own appetites and his own vanity, shall not escape punishment.* The great vice of his character was the want of diffusive benevolence. He felt no compassion for the misery of others. Even though he saw a fellow-creature ready to perish with disease and hunger, it melted not his soul to charity. He dies, and is placed under the painful discipline which is necessary to change his selfish disposition. In hell he lifts up his eyes, being in torments. He supplicates for mercy; he prays that Lazarus may be sent to dip the tip of his finger in water, to cool his parched tongue; his request is refused; and, finding that he can obtain no mitigation of his own suffering, what does he next solicit? “I pray that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.”

The very disposition, then, for which he is punished, is already beginning to be rectified; the discipline under which he is placed is taking effect; he has ceased to care only for himself; a spark of benevolence is kindled in his heart. Instead of imbibing what is gen-

* See Campbell’s note on this passage, in which will be found some excellent practical observations on this beautiful and expressive parable.

erally represented as the spirit of the devil and his angels, from having associated with them—instead of soliciting permission to go and beguile his brethren to this place of torment, he is animated by a disposition of the purest benevolence—he who a little while ago was so insensible to the suffering of others, that the extremes of disease and hunger could not excite in his bosom a single sensation of pity.

This parable, therefore, which does not allude to the duration of punishment, but which gives a just exhibition of the tendency of the chastisement of a wise and benevolent Being, countenances the doctrine, that the wicked will be ultimately restored to virtue and to happiness.

SECTION VII.

OF THE OPINION ,THAT THERE WILL BE NO SUCCESS- IVE DURATION IN A FUTURE STATE.

It is not easy to account for the general prevalence of the opinion, that time will end with the present state, and eternity commence with the next. The notion itself is very obscure. As far as it is intelligible, the common idea of eternity seems to be that of a vast gulph, in which day and night, time itself, and all successive duration, are swallowed up. With this is generally connected the opinion, that after this state commences everything must continue as it is, without the possibility of change, and that therefore the wickedness and misery of the impenitent must necessarily remain unalterable.

There is, however, no reason to believe that successive duration will terminate with the present life. Indeed, it is by no means easy to conceive how there can be duration without succession ; at all events, no one can form a clear conception of it ; and, to ground such a doctrine as that of endless misery on a notion so unintelligible, can be justified by nothing but the extreme exigency of the case.

The only passage of scripture which seems to countenance this opinion, is Revelation, x. 6, "The angel swore—that there should be time no longer." But the

context demonstrates that this language cannot signify that eternity shall commence, if by this be meant endless duration without succession ; for in the very next verse another angel is spoken of as succeeding the sixth, in terms which are incompatible with this idea. Ver. 7, “But *in the days* of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished.”

The phrase in the received text is *ouk estai eti* ; the reading of the Alexandrian, Ephrem, and other approved MSS., adopted by Griesbach, is *onketi estai*. The Improved Version renders the passage in the following manner :—ver. 5–7, “And the angel whom I saw standing upon the sea and upon the land, lifted up his right hand to heaven, and swore by him who liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven and the things which are therein, and the earth and the things which are therein, and the sea and the things which are therein, *that the time would not be yet*, but *in the days* of the blast of the seventh angel, when he shall sound his trumpet, and the mystery of God hath been finished, as he hath proclaimed the glad tidings to his servants the prophets.”

Wakefield renders the passage, “that there should be no longer delay,” with whom Dr. Gill agrees, who gives the following exposition of the text : “The words will bear to be rendered, as some have observed, that there should be delay no longer ; that is, no delay of the coming and kingdom of Christ ; though the bridegroom has tarried, he will come, and will not tarry beyond the time the angel swears to. Every seal of the sealed book, chap. v. 1, is a delay of and stop upon the open appearance of Christ’s kingdom ; and the opening of every seal is an advance to it. And, when

the sixth seal was opened, and Paganism destroyed, and Christianity spread throughout the empire, the kingdom of Christ might have been expected to have appeared ; but there was a seventh seal to be opened, which was a stop upon it, and which, when opened, brought ruin and destruction upon the Christian empire, both western and eastern, under the six first trumpets ; and till the seventh sounds there will be a delay of Christ's kingdom ; but when that sounds there will be no more delay."

The language of scripture is directly hostile to the notion, that in a future state there will be no successive duration. The Greek phrases, by which the duration of a future state is expressed, necessarily imply it ; as, *eis aiona*, for an age ; *eis tous aionas ton aionon*, for ages of ages, &c.

Such are the passages which are commonly adduced from scripture, in proof of the endless misery of the wicked. Those which have been considered are all that are generally deemed conclusive or important. However frequently they may be repeated, or confidently urged, they are totally insufficient to establish this gloomy and unscriptural opinion.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE ARGUMENTS CONCEIVED TO FAVOR THE DOCTRINE OF ENDLESS MISERY, WHICH ARE NOT FOUNDED ON THE EXPRESS DECLARATIONS OF SCRIPTURE.

SECTION I.

OF THE INFINITE EVIL OF SIN.

ONE of the arguments urged in support of the doctrine of endless misery is so obviously fallacious, that it scarcely deserves a serious consideration; namely, that sin is an infinite evil, and therefore deserves an infinite punishment.

That sin is not only an evil, but the greatest which can possibly attach to a moral and accountable being, is an indisputable truth; but that the slightest transgression is an infinite offence, and deserves an infinite punishment, are positions to which neither reason nor revelation afford the shadow of support.

The advocates of this extraordinary opinion endeavor to establish it, by an argument no less singular than the doctrine itself. Sin, say they, is an infinite evil, because it is committed against an infinite person

The heinousness of an offence, they contend, increases in proportion to the dignity of the personage against whom it is committed; hence, a crime against a king is always visited with greater severity of punishment than an offence against an ordinary person. Since, therefore, God is infinite, and since every sin is an offence against God, every sin is an infinite evil.

The full reply to this reasoning is, that it is not rank and station which aggravate a crime, but its tendency to occasion misery. An offence against a king, it is true, is of a greater magnitude, and is punished with more severity than the injurious treatment of an ordinary person; but the reason is, that an offence against a king is likely to be attended with worse consequences than one against a private individual. If a king be treated with insult or injustice, a whole nation may be injured and thrown into commotion. In the one case, the evil attaches to a single individual; in the other, to millions of persons. In the one case, therefore, it is as much greater than the other, as the sum of an evil which extends to millions exceeds that which attaches only to a single individual.

Besides, were sin an infinite evil, there could be no degree in transgression; for, when speaking of infinity, it is absurd to talk of greater or less. All human actions, therefore—all the language of mankind, all laws, human and divine, and all punishments, contradict this opinion; for they all proceed upon the principle, that some crimes are of greater magnitude than others. We know, too, that the Deity distinguishes in the most exact manner between different offences—that he apportions to each an equitable degree of punishment, and that he who has sinned greatly shall be beaten

with many, and he who has offended less, with fewer stripes.

Indeed, it is when we consider the minute shades by which different sins, and even different characters, are discriminated, that we perceive in the most forcible manner the impossibility both of the doctrine of endless misery, and of limited punishment terminated by destruction. How slight is the difference between the worst good man and the best wicked man! How impossible is it for the utmost exertion of human sagacity to distinguish between them! Yet, for this imperceptible difference in character, there is, according to these doctrines, an infinite difference in destiny! He who is lowest in the scale of goodness, and who differs from the best wicked man only by the slightest shade, is admitted to infinite happiness. He in whom wickedness preponderates upon the whole, but in so small a measure that no human penetration can discern it, is shut out from the enjoyment of heaven—doomed by one doctrine to inconceivable torments through endless ages, and by the other to dreadful suffering for a very protracted period, and then to endless extinction of being. According to one opinion, the positive *torment*, according to the other, the positive *loss*, is infinite; yet the difference in desert is indistinguishable! This is a disproportion to which there is no parallel in any of the works of the Deity, and which cannot exist, it is reasonable to believe, in any of his dispensations.

SECTION II.

OF THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF ENDLESS MISERY FOUNDED ON THE DIVINE JUSTICE.

As the Author of the beautiful system of the universe must possess almighty power and infinite wisdom, so he must be endowed with every moral excellence. He who gave to all things the relations they possess must be perfectly acquainted with them; and, since he cannot possibly err, nor have any motive to commit injustice, he must always act with undeviating rectitude.

Justice is one of those virtues which are essential to the perfection of the moral character. The intercourse of society could not subsist without it, and it is peculiarly necessary in a governor and judge. It is, therefore, with the greatest propriety, attributed to the wise and benevolent Ruler of the world.

Yet, while it is universally admitted, that the Deity possesses this excellence in the highest perfection, many persons entertain very erroneous ideas respecting it. It is usual to speak of it as a stupendous and awful attribute, inexplicable in its nature, terrible in its consequences, and possessing little in common with the virtue of justice among mankind. It is represented as contrary in its nature to goodness, and all the use which is made of it, in favor of the doctrine of

endless misery, must proceed upon this presumption; for, if it be of the same nature as benevolence, it can no more oppose the final restoration of all mankind, than goodness itself.

To show the fallacy of the distinction which many persons endeavor to establish between the justice and goodness of God, it is sufficient to observe, that the Deity cannot possess two attributes of an opposite nature to each other—that all his perfections harmonize—that they have all one origin and one object—that that origin is benevolence, and that object the diffusion of happiness; but, as there is no attribute concerning which such vague and mistaken notions are entertained, and as these opinions necessarily affect the view which is taken of the most interesting doctrines, it is of great importance to establish precise and just conceptions respecting it.

The misapprehension which has prevailed relative to this subject, has arisen chiefly from the opinion, that justice in God is of a different nature from this excellence in man. But, as we have no idea of the divine goodness, except from those indications of it which are similar to the appearances that prove the benignity of human beings, so we can have no conception of the divine justice, if it do not resemble that quality which, in the intercourse of men with each other, is distinguished by this term.

Man does not stand alone in the creation. He bears certain relations to his fellow-beings. From these arise certain duties, the exact performance of which constitutes the virtue termed justice. To the several relations of father, brother, husband, citizen, magistrate, judge, pertain appropriate duties, and when a

person uniformly and faithfully discharges them, we say that he is just.

And though it is true, that the term justice is sometimes used in a more restricted sense, to express one particular duty, yet it is often employed even in a still more extensive acceptation than that which is here assigned. It frequently comprehends not only the duties which we owe to our fellow-creatures, but those also which relate to ourselves and to God. In this sense it is often used in scripture, as in the following passages:

Proverbs, iii. 33, "He blesseth the habitation of the just." iv. 18, "The path of the just is as the shining light." x. 7, "The memory of the just is blessed." xvii. 26, "To punish the just is not good." Hebrews, ii. 4, "The just shall live by faith." Luke, ii. 25, "Simeon was just and devout." xiv. 14, "Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." In all these places, it is obvious that the term just is used to express general excellence of character.

In common language, however, it is more frequently employed to denote the faithful discharge of social duties—more commonly still to signify the treatment of men according to their character and desert, without regard to their persons or station—in which sense it stands opposed to partiality—and perhaps most commonly of all, to express the equitable punishment of the guilty.

As men are connected with their fellow-beings, so the Deity bears a certain relation to men. He is their Creator, their Parent, their Moral Governor, and their Judge. When we say that *he* is just, we can mean no more than that he is guided in his conduct towards his

creatures by a principle similar in its nature to the virtue of justice among mankind ; that, as their Creator, for example, he makes a provision for their comfortable existence ; as a Parent, he satisfies their returning wants, and teaches them the lessons of wisdom and virtue ; as their Moral Governor, he rules them according to the principles of perfect equity and benevolence ; and, as their Judge, he treats them with the utmost exactness, according to wise and salutary laws, without partiality.

Perhaps, however, it will lead to a more precise and accurate conception of the only real difference in this principle, as a divine and a human excellence, to say that justice in man is the rendering to every person that which is his due, and that justice in God is the treatment of every person in the manner which is best suited to his moral state.

When it is affirmed that this principle, as a human excellence, consists in rendering to every person that which is his due, this definition is meant to include, not only what the laws of the state and the institutions of society require, but also what humanity, conscience, and religion enjoin. The just man is he who, not limiting himself to the demands of any prescribed law, does good to the utmost extent of his judgment and ability.

But because he has neither the wisdom invariably to discern what is best adapted to the moral condition of his fellow-beings, nor the power always to modify his conduct according to it, even though he should clearly perceive it, it is not proper to make this the rule of his actions. Such a rule is applicable only to him who possesses the attribute of omniscience, and who has in his own hands the issues of events.

It is evident that the distinction which is here made

between this principle, as it exists in the Deity and in man, arises not from any difference in the nature of the virtue in the one being and in the other, but solely in the degree in which they possess it—the one enjoying it in absolute perfection, the other only in a limited measure.

Dr. Edwards gives the following account of justice: * Sometimes, he says, it means commutative justice, sometimes distributive, and sometimes general, or public justice. Commutative justice he defines, the equal exchange and restitution of property; distributive justice, the equal distribution of rewards and punishments; general, or public justice, the maintenance of the rights of a community, whether a city, state, empire, or the universe. This last he considers, though a frequent, an improper use of the word, because justice, in this sense, is the same with benevolence.

In the inquiry, whether the endless punishment of the wicked be consistent with justice, he observes, the word justice does not mean commutative justice, because the inquiry has no respect to property, nor does it mean general or public justice; for, though it be important to examine whether the endless punishment of the sinner dying in impenitence be consistent with the general interest of the universe, yet that is a different question: but it signifies distributive justice; and the precise inquiry is, whether to inflict an endless punishment on the sinner dying in impenitence, be a treatment of him by his Judge, correspondent, and no more than correspondent, to his demerit, or to his moral conduct and personal character. He proceeds to state, that a just punishment is that which is proportioned to the

* Salvation of all Men Strictly Examined, &c., chap. iv.

crime punished, and that a punishment may be said to be proportioned to the crime punished, when, by the pain or natural evil of the punishment, it exhibits a just idea of the moral evil or vicious tendency of the crime, and a proper motive to restrain all intelligent beings from the commission of it. He infers that the infliction of endless misery is such a punishment, but he advances no argument to prove it. He grounds the justice of such punishment on the nature of sin, which he holds to be an infinite evil, the proof of which he does not himself state, but considers it sufficiently established by his father and other writers on that side. This, indeed, is the only argument ever alleged to prove that the infliction of endless misery is consistent with the divine justice; and, as this is a point of great importance, it may be proper to state the argument in the words of its chief advocate.

"I shall show," says the author of the Discourse on the Eternity of Hell Torments,* "that it is not inconsistent with the justice of God to inflict an eternal punishment. To evince this, I shall use only one argument, namely, that sin is heinous enough to deserve such punishment, or such a punishment is no more than proportionable to the demerit of sin. If the evil of sin be infinite, as the punishment is, then it is manifest, that the punishment is no more than proportionable to the sin punished, and therefore is no more than sin deserves. The eternity of the punishment of ungodly men renders it infinite, and it renders it no more than infinite, and therefore no more than proportion-

* Edwards on the Eternity of Hell Torments, pp. 3. 4.—The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners, &c., p. 4.

able to the heinousness of the guilt. Sin, then, being an infinite evil, deserves an infinite punishment; such punishment, therefore, is just, which was the thing to be proved."

It has already been shown, that sin is not an infinite evil; the only argument on which the justice of the eternity of punishment is founded, is therefore fallacious. Some persons, indeed, believe in the eternity of punishment, who do not believe in the infinity of the evil of sin, but they differ from this author only in believing without any reason, what he believed for an insufficient reason.

In the nature of things, sin cannot deserve an infinite punishment; it has no attribute of infinity. It is the act of a finite being, and therefore cannot be infinite in magnitude. It is limited to the duration of a few years, and therefore can bear no proportion to eternity. Between a punishment extending through eternity, and sin committed in that brief period of time which constitutes the present life, there is just the same disproportion that there is between eternity and time. Admitting, therefore, according to Dr. Edwards' own definition, that a just punishment is that which is proportioned to the crime punished, it follows, that the infliction of misery without end, for the sin committed in so brief a period as this mortal life, is not only unjust, but unjust beyond all measure and bound.

Dr. Edwards endeavors to show that this argument is not conclusive, because it proves too much, since it supposes that no crime can be justly punished for a longer period than was consumed in the perpetration of it. He maintains, that if it be once allowed, that a crime may be punished for a longer time than was con-

sumed in the perpetration of it, the whole argument, that a creature cannot in a finite life commit such sin as shall deserve an endless punishment, must be given up—that, if a person may in one day commit a crime worthy of a punishment that shall continue a year, he may in one day commit a crime worthy of a punishment that shall continue two years, or ten years, or during his whole life—that, therefore, in determining the duration of punishment, no regard at all is paid to the time taken up in the perpetration of the crime—and that, if no regard be paid to this, there is no absurdity in supposing that the crimes of a finite life may deserve an endless punishment.

It is true, that, in apportioning punishment to crime, less attention is paid to the time consumed in the commission of it, than perhaps to any other circumstance; yet it is not correct to state that no attention is paid to it; for a crime which is committed in a very short space of time is generally considered less heinous than one which requires many months or years to consummate it. All other circumstances of a crime remaining the same, the length of time required to perpetrate it is itself considered an aggravation of it; not, indeed, simply because so much time has been spent in the commission of the evil deed, but because, in proportion as the time is lengthened, the opportunities for reflection are supposed to be multiplied. It is therefore considered as implying a more fixed determination to evil, to continue in the commission of it a very long, than a very short period. But the true principle on which alone punishment can be apportioned to crime is the sum of evil produced, or likely to be produced, by the criminal action. A crime deserves punishment in pro-

portion, and only in proportion, as it tends to produce misery. This must regulate both the degree and the duration of all punishment that is just. The duration of punishment, it is true, is of no consequence, except as it influences the amount of punishment. However long it last, it is not unjust, provided the punishment upon the whole be not excessive. But for this very reason it is, that the infliction of endless misery, for the sins of the present life, is utterly inconsistent with justice, because, whatever be the amount of misery which those sins may deserve, provided they do not deserve infinite misery, (and that they do not deserve infinite misery has already been shown,) a period must come, in the ages of eternity, when that amount will have been exceeded, even though the suffering endured at any particular period be inconsiderable. The collective sum of misery endured through a successive but interminable eries of ages, however small the actual suffering at any one period, must at length exceed what any one can conceive the sins of the present life to deserve; and of this the conviction would be inevitable and universal, were it possible to present that collective sum distinctly before the mind—to compare the amount of the suffering with the number and magnitude of the offences. It is when the mind does contemplate what the sins of the present life are, and what misery without end is, and does compare the one with the other, that it perceives clearly, that, were every moment of human life, from the cradle to the grave, devoted to the perpetration of the most horrible crimes, it would be utterly inconsistent with justice, to visit them with endless misery; because the amount of misery produced by all the crimes which it would be pos-

sible to crowd into this short space of existence could bear no manner of comparison to that which would ultimately be produced by such a punishment. If a person, for stealing from his neighbor the sum of one guinea, were made positively miserable seventy years, every one would acknowledge that the punishment was greater than the crime deserved, and was therefore unjust; but the infliction of positive misery seventy years, for the crime of stealing one guinea, is mildness and mercy, compared with the infliction of positive misery through the never-ending ages of eternity, for the crimes of seventy years. Even admitting, therefore, that, in apportioning punishment to crime, no regard is to be paid to the time spent in the commission of the crime, yet regard must be paid to the time spent in suffering the punishment, otherwise the amount of the punishment may become most excessive, and therefore most unjust. For, though the mere duration of punishment may be of no importance, so long as the whole punishment is not excessive, yet it may become excessive, from the very circumstance of its protracted duration.

Nor is it possible in this argument to separate the idea of punishment from that of the duration of it. It has been said* that the advocates for endless punishment do not contend that sin deserves an infinite degree of endless punishment—that they do not pretend to determine the degree of punishment it deserves, and that it becomes all to leave that to God, who alone can determine it; but the truth is, that the doctrine of endless misery does determine the degree of misery which sin deserves, at least to the extent of deciding

* "Salvation of all Men Strictly Examined," &c., chap. iv., p. 107.

that it deserves an infinite degree of misery; for the amount of misery ultimately endured, if it be without end, whatever be the degree of suffering experienced at any given period, must be infinite. And the representations which the advocates of the doctrine of endless misery uniformly give, of the sufferings of the wicked in the future state, decidedly prove, that in their conception future punishment will be infinite in degree as well as duration. What words can show this more strongly than the passage which has already been cited from the Discourse on the Eternity of Hell Torments? In that passage, the author represents the wicked as spending thousands and thousands of ages in pain, in wailing and lamenting, groaning, and shrieking, and gnashing their teeth, with their souls full of dreadful grief and amazement, with their bodies, and every member of them, full of racking torture, without any possibility of getting ease, without any possibility of moving God to pity by their cries, without any possibility of hiding themselves from him, without any possibility of diverting their thoughts from their pain, without any possibility of obtaining any manner of mitigation or help, or change for the better, and, under the influence of these racking torments, wishing that they might be turned into nothing, but without any hope of it, or that they might be turned into a toad or a serpent, but without any hope of it; and, as if this intolerable misery were not sufficient to satiate the vengeance of Almighty God, it is added, that in the future state the capacity of the wicked will probably be enlarged, and their understandings will be quicker and stronger, and that God can give them as great a sense and as strong an impression of eternity as he pleases,

to increase their grief and torment! Let, then, the mind conceive, if it can conceive, what the amount of such misery, endured through all the ages of eternity, must be, and determine whether its infliction for the sins of seventy years be consistent with justice.

But it is further argued, that though it were not just to inflict an endless punishment for the sins committed in this life only, yet there would be no injustice in suffering the sinner to go on in sin, and to punish him continually, and without end, as he sins—that, if God may, without injustice, permit a creature to fall into sin to-day, and punish him for it, he may do the same to-morrow and through any period of his existence—that if it be just to leave a sinner to endless sin, it is just to inflict on him endless punishment for that endless sin—that, therefore, the endless sin and punishment of a creature is no more inconsistent with the divine justice, than the existence of sin and punishment in any instance, and for ever so short a duration—that, since it is conceded that the sinner may be justly punished until he repents, it follows that if he never repents he may be justly punished without end—that, therefore, in order to establish the position, that endless punishment is not reconcilable with divine justice, it must be shown that it is not consistent with divine justice to leave a sinner to proceed without end in his own chosen course of sin, and to punish him daily for his daily sins, and that, until this shall have been done, it will be in vain to plead that those who die in impenitence will all finally be saved, because endless punishment is not reconcilable with the justice of God.*

This argument is opposed to the plain and uniform

* *Salvation of all Men Strictly Examined, &c., chap. vi., p. 149.*

doctrine of scripture, and to the universally received opinion among Christians, that the punishment of the future state will be inflicted for the sins of the present life. It is never said in the scripture, that, in the place of punishment to which he will be doomed, the sinner will go on in sin, and be punished continually and without end as he sins—that he will be left to endless sin, and that endless punishment will be inflicted upon him for that endless sin. No language of this kind—no language conveying any thing like such ideas, is ever used; but the punishment is always said to be inflicted for the deeds done in the body; and the sorrow of the sinner is uniformly represented as excited by recollections of the sins of the present life, and this is the uniform opinion of Christians of all denominations. It is not allowable, therefore, for the advocate of endless misery, when, in the argument on the justice of God, he is pressed with the difficulty of explaining how, in consistency with that justice, the sins of seventy years can be visited with an eternity of misery, to have recourse to the supposition, that that misery may be inflicted, not for the sins of the present life only, but also for the sins of the future state, which may be committed in endless succession.

But, though this supposition cannot be admitted, even granting that it were just, the great difficulty with which the doctrine of endless misery is encumbered is not in the least removed. In order to prove that endless punishment is not reconcilable with divine justice, it must be shown, it is said, that it is not consistent with divine justice, to leave a sinner to proceed without end in his own chosen course of sin, and to punish him daily for his daily sins. It is replied, that to

leave the sinner in this manner, and then to punish him for so sinning, is not only not consistent with justice, but is so utterly opposed to it, that it is not in the power of the human imagination to conceive of a more flagrant and enormous violation of it. For God made man what he is ; God ordained the circumstances in which man is placed ; God knew that such circumstances, operating on such a creature, would inevitably involve him in sin and misery through all eternity. With this clear foresight, to alter nothing in the nature of the creature, to alter nothing in the arrangement of the circumstances, but to persist in giving him that very nature, and in placing him in those very circumstances, the inevitable result of which he knew would secure the production of this endless sin and misery—is malignant in the highest possible degree ; and, were the Deity malignity itself, he could not act worse. To speak of justice in connection with such a transaction is an insult to the human understanding. It would be inconceivably less absurd to speak of the excellence and beauty of the worst act of the worst tyrant that ever disgraced humanity. The overwhelming difficulty of attributing to the benignant Father of mankind this horrible injustice must always attach to the doctrine of endless misery ; nor can any ingenuity or sophistry exonerate it. Justice absolutely requires that the Creator should render every creature which his hand has formed happy, upon the whole, the whole of his existence considered. Any possible condition of any creature, which is consistent with a balance of enjoyment, is reconcilable with justice. No condition of any creature, with whatever purpose appointed, that is not consistent with that balance, is reconcilable with

justice ; for the reason so often assigned in this work, that non-existence is no evil, but that existence with a preponderance of misery is, and that a being who acts voluntarily, and who gives existence, making that existence miserable, proves, as clearly as it is possible to prove, that he is evil.

On the other hand, to allow sin and misery to prevail for a season, and to make them the means of increasing the ultimate amount of happiness, is not only consistent with justice, but may be an evidence ; and, the more it is considered, the more clearly it appears to be an evidence of the highest wisdom, and the most perfect goodness.

Nor is it proper to represent the doctrine of Universal Restoration as teaching that sinners will ultimately be restored to happiness on the ground of justice. This is a favorite mode of representing the subject with Dr. Edwards. And, because the pardon of sin, and the communication of future happiness, are so constantly and uniformly said, in scripture, to be owing to the free and unmerited goodness of God, any system which seems to make these blessings the right of the sinner will of course appear inconsistent both with reason and scripture. There is reason to believe that on certain minds this argument has produced great impression ; but nothing can be more false than the statement on which the argument is founded, and nothing more fallacious than the argument itself. It is true, that in a popular sense the wicked, after they have endured the punishment which their sins deserve, may be said to be exempted from further suffering, on the ground of justice ; but still, if they are permitted to enjoy future happiness, it is obvious, that all that

happiness is the gift of pure goodness. But the full answer to this singular argument is, that, in strictness, exemption from further punishment, even after the full penalty of sin has been endured, cannot be claimed as a right, because punishment itself is goodness—goodness guided in its manifestations by wisdom—goodness adapting itself in the best possible manner to the moral state of the recipient—goodness, the greatest and the best which the Deity himself, under such circumstances, can bestow. In truth, punishment is the means—the best and the only means, by which the sinner can be rendered happy; and therefore his obligation to his Moral Governor for punishment is just the same as it is for happiness.

For goodness and justice are the same. Justice requires no more punishment for sin than goodness. Goodness requires the same as justice, but the manner in which benevolence manifests itself under the form of goodness and of justice is different, and therefore requires a different appellation. A person who forgives an offence upon repentance and reformation is good. This is one modification of goodness, which, by way of eminence, is often called goodness itself, or more strictly, mercy. The person who visits an offence which is neither repented of nor amended, with a proper degree of pain, is also good. This is another modification of goodness, to which the term justice is applied. Mercy and justice, therefore do not differ from each other in their nature, since they equally arise from benevolence, and they differ in aspect only according to the moral condition of the being with regard to whom they are exemplified.*

* Vide p. 239.

This account of divine justice explains in a most satisfactory manner the principle on which the Deity rewards and punishes mankind. Did men never violate the laws of rectitude, he would make them invariably and completely happy. But there is no person who is free from fault. The moral state of every individual is in some respect, or at some period, such as it ought not to be. Every bad disposition, and every improper habit, must be rectified before happiness can be enjoyed. It is necessary, therefore, that the Moral Governor of the world should vary his conduct according to the character of the person whom he has to treat—that he should visit the good with favor, and manifest his disapprobation of the wicked; for, if he were to make happiness compatible with sin, it could not be corrected.

The effect of pain is to make us dislike and avoid that which causes it. It is for this reason that pain is annexed to sin. Sin is an evil which it is necessary to remove; pain is employed as the instrument of its destruction; and that principle by which the Deity has established this constitution of things, by which he so regulates events, as invariably to secure the ultimate reward of goodness, and the punishment of wickedness, is distinguished by the term justice.

Again, then, we see that goodness and justice are not opposite and opposing attributes—that they have the same nature, the same origin, the same end—that they assume a different aspect, indeed, according to the character of the individual towards whom they are exercised, but that they equally arise from benevolence, and are equally exerted to promote happiness. Justice is so far from being incompatible with goodness, that

it is the highest goodness, directed by the most perfect wisdom.

Were it necessary to add any thing more, to show that the divine justice is not inconsistent with the attribute of goodness, but a part of it, the consideration of the design of its inflictions would afford further evidence of this truth. Every violation of the law of God involves the transgressor, sooner or later, in suffering; and of this constitution of things, by which pain is inseparably connected with deviation from rectitude, the Supreme Being is the author. Why did he appoint it? Why did he so dispose the whole tendency of his moral government, as to ensure this consequence? Why does he, who is a Being of unerring wisdom and infinite benevolence, never suffer any offence which is unrepented of to escape punishment? Since his very nature is love, and since he created all his intelligent offspring in order to make them happy, it can be no gratification to him to involve them in suffering. Their groans can be no music to his ear. If he afflict them, it must be not for his own gratification, but for their benefit.

Neither is it the part of justice to indulge passion, nor to gratify revenge, nor in any mysterious way to satisfy the claims of law, but to check the progress of vice and misery, by correcting the evil dispositions from which they proceed. By inflicting punishment on the sinner, it accomplishes this in two ways: first, by the effect of example, operating as a warning on those who may be disposed to commit similar offences, and, secondly, by making the transgressor himself feel the evil consequences of his conduct, and thereby inducing him to avoid it in future. Every person allows that the

first is one object of the inflictions of justice ; but surely the second is at least equally important, since it applies to the root of the evil at once, and aims to correct actual, while the other can only prevent possible evil. If the punishment which justice imposes can prevent the commission of crimes in future, and correct the disposition from which the past have proceeded, it is both more perfect and more benevolent, than if it effect the one without the other. That it is in itself possible to accomplish both, cannot be denied ; and, since God is able to do all that is possible, and disposed to do all that is best, he must effect both.

In the 18th chapter of Ezekiel, there is a beautiful passage, which illustrates in a striking manner this view of the divine justice. The house of Israel had complained that the conduct of God was not just. He condescends to reason with them on the subject, and to prove that his dispensations are perfectly equitable. "If," says he, "the wicked turn from all the sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die ; his transgressions that he hath committed shall not be mentioned to him ; in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways and live ? But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live ? All the righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned ; in his trespass that he has trespassed, and in his sins that he has sinned, he shall die. Yet ye say that the way of the Lord is not

equal. Hear now, O house of Israel, is not my way equal, and are not your ways unequal? When a righteous man turneth away from his righteousness and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them, for his iniquity that he hath done he shall die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die."

This is as though he had said, When the wicked man turns from his sins, I cease to punish him. I do not remember against him his former transgressions. His moral state is changed: my conduct towards him is therefore no longer the same. While he was wedded to transgression, it was necessary that he should be punished. Now that he is repentant and obedient, it has ceased to be so, and I may visit him with the smiles of favor. I have no pleasure in his misery or death; neither can benefit or gratify me. All my dispensations are designed, and have a tendency to make him in love with life, with goodness, and with happiness.

If, on the other hand, the righteous man forsake the path of rectitude, and do according to the abominations of the wicked, I suffer him no longer to be at peace; I permit not his former righteousness to secure him from punishment. It is necessary that experience should teach him the error of his choice. It is the only way to rectify his will and reclaim his heart. Is not this conduct consistent with justice? Does not justice render it indispensable? To both I act as their moral state requires, and thus I will always act. The right-

eousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him. Do you demand the reason of my conduct? It is because I have no pleasure in the misery of the wicked, and because it is the object of my dispensations to make the wicked righteous, and the righteous happy.

Such is the principle according to which the Moral Governor of the world himself declares that he invariably regulates his conduct. Nothing surely can afford a more solid ground of confidence and trust. In the state in which his wisdom has seen fit to place us on the earth, there is much which, to our short-sighted view, may seem inconsistent with perfect rectitude. When we see the triumph of the vicious and the fall of the virtuous—when we behold the prevalence of natural and moral evil, and contemplate the wickedness and misery which desolate the earth, who is there that is not sometimes ready to raise a murmur against the Sovereign Ruler of events, or who does not lift, trembling, his eye to his throne, half doubting whether there be indeed an all-perfect Ruler there? When the storm of adversity falls with violence on our head—when our hearts ache with suffering, or when we weep for the woes of those who are dear to us as ourselves—when our brightest hopes are shrouded in disappointment—when our comforts are snatched from us, and the merciless spoiler bears to the tomb our best-loved friends—the soul, desponding, asks if that can be wisdom which occasions such terrible emotion, or that goodness which gives but to take away. It is a suspicion which agony extorts from human infirmity. But, in the Christian's breast, it is only the suspicion of a moment.

No where can he direct his attention without perceiving traces of the goodness of God, nor even in the hour of deepest sorrow can he look inward on himself, without discovering numberless proofs of mercy. His faith revives. The iron grasp of despair loosens its hold of his heart. Again he is himself, and, while his principles resume their wonted influence in his soul, the language of reviving hope and trust falls from his lips—"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Can he, whose benevolence called me into being, made me what I am, and gave me what I possess, forget to be gracious, or treat me with injustice? It is impossible! 'Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne!'"

But it is not to the sorrows of life alone, that this view of the divine justice applies its sustaining energy. It supports our hopes in the prospect of that awful day, which it is so difficult to contemplate with composure. There are moments, when the most pious and holy tremble at the thought of appearing before the tribunal of the Judge of the whole earth; but the conviction, that his decisions must tend to promote the ultimate welfare of all intelligent beings, subdues every gloomy and mistrustful fear.

It is not merely for his own felicity, that the good man is concerned. He looks beyond himself. The destiny of others affects his own. If the great majority of his fellow-creatures are to be banished to irremediable and endless woe, he feels that he cannot be happy. "Merciful Father! (his own felicity excites the exclamation, and he cannot repress it: Merciful Father, he cries,) can any attribute of thy nature require this? Canst thou have formed the great majority of thy

creatures on purpose to torment them? O no; every perfection of thy nature, the operation of which is felt by man, must be exerted for his good."

Viewing, then, the attribute of justice, which has been supposed to require the endless misery of the greater part of the human race, as that very principle which is designed to prevent this terrible consequence, he feels himself capable of relying with implicit confidence on the decisions of the Judge, both with regard to himself and to all mankind. He is satisfied that he will treat even the most criminal with perfect equity—that he will place them in circumstances the best adapted to their unhappy condition—that his discipline will ultimately accomplish its end, and extirpate sin and misery from the creation.

By this attribute, then, must be determined the future destiny of all reasonable beings. How deeply ought this solemn truth to be engraven on every mind! How weak, how foolish is the indulgence of any criminal propensity! The scrutiny of Omniscience is on us. The power of Omnipotence surrounds us. The decisions of unerring justice await us. Who, then, can sin with the hope of impunity? Let the wicked man hear and tremble, for remorse and woe await him; and let him that conceiveth iniquity in his heart consider with himself, that justice and judgment are the habitation of the throne of the Great Being with whom he has to do.

SECTION III.

OF THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF ENDLESS MISERY, FOUNDED ON THE DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY.

IF the justice of God afford no argument in favor of the doctrine of endless misery, still less is it supported by the divine sovereignty. If by the sovereignty of God be meant his exemption from control, this may be a reason for his doing what is right, but cannot be a reason for his doing what is wrong. If he have benevolence to design the ultimate happiness of all, wisdom to discern the means of securing his purpose, and if he be absolutely sovereign—that is, if there be no superior power to control his will, this is so far from affording an argument against the final prevalence of purity and enjoyment, that it forms a solid foundation on which the hope of it may be established.

If from the sovereignty of God it be inferred, that he can do whatever he pleases, this conclusion is certainly just; but at the same time it must be remembered, that there are some things which he cannot will. To suppose, for example, that he could create millions of beings, with a determination to doom them to intolerable and endless agony, contradicts every idea of his character which natural and revealed religion teach, and cannot possibly be proved by the admission, that he possesses unlimited power; for, though he be sover-

eign, and can do what he will, he is also good, and cannot will what is malevolent.

It has been objected to the doctrine of Universal Restoration, as has already been observed, that it places the future happiness of mankind on the footing of right and claim. Nothing can be less true. The advocates of this opinion are so far from believing that endless happiness can be demanded as a right, that they contend that no creature has a claim to existence itself, much less to this or to that degree of enjoyment. They maintain that life is so entirely a free gift, that every intelligent being, however low his rank in the scale of creation, or however little his happiness exceeds his misery, ought, if his pleasure do preponderate, to receive the boon with gratitude; but they contend, that, if the balance of enjoyment be against him, he has nothing for which to be thankful, and that a benevolent Being, who causes him to live for ever, must make his immortality a blessing.

Such, then, are the arguments which are commonly urged in support of the doctrine of Endless Misery, whether derived from the language of scripture, or from considerations which are independent of it. If to affirm that no sober mind can consider them with candor, without being satisfied of their insufficiency and fallacy, be rather the language of strong individual conviction, than of prudence or of truth, it may at least be said, that the preceding observations deserve the serious attention of every person who wishes to contemplate the Deity with reverence and love, or to vindicate the claims of the Christian system to the respect and reception of reflective men.

The cheering and benevolent tendency of a belief in

the ultimate happiness of all intelligent beings ought at least to entitle it to attention. He who believes that the whole system of things is under the wisest and the best direction, has a source of consolation which must be entirely unknown to him whose system leads him to suspect that the wisdom and benevolence of its Author are limited and partial. Embracing the faith of the first, when true to my principles, I can contemplate the present with complacency, and anticipate the future with delight. I can look upon adversity with resignation—upon prosperity with a calm and chastened joy. I can smile even in those moments when neither philosophy nor religion can check the starting tear. I see, it is true, that man is born to trouble, that his days are few and evil, that impurity stains him, that passion blinds him, that evil of every kind assails him, and that a future state will increase the misery of many individuals for a very protracted period; but I see, too, a principle at work, which must finally destroy it. I see the hand of the Deity arranging every event with exquisite skill and unbounded benignity. I see the prospect brighten as the wheels of time revolve, developing gradually the stupendous scheme, and manifesting at every movement new indications of wisdom, and new demonstrations of love. I see at the helm of affairs an intelligence which cannot err, a watchfulness which cannot tire, a benignity which cannot be unkind, and a power which cannot be frustrated. I see at the head of his large family a Father, whose equal love is extended to every individual, who is laboring to promote the happiness of each alike, according to the measure of capacity he has given, and who will not labor in vain. Though clouds and

darkness are round about him, I am satisfied that righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. I therefore bow with resignation, where I cannot exult with joy, and glow with hope, even when nearest to despair.

But to those who believe that our heavenly Father is partial and capricious in his kindness—that he is the cruel and inexorable tyrant of the great majority of his creatures—that, by a irreversible decree, he doomed them millions of ages before their existence to unutterable torments, and that a few only escape this horrid fate, with affectionate and solemn earnestness I would say, How can you be happy? How can you be happy even for yourself? How great are the chances, that you are not in the number of the elect! How many thousands are passed by! How few are the chosen! How much more probable is it, that you are among the thousands than among the few! Why do you believe that you are the favorite of heaven? What mark is engraven on your forehead—what sensations are peculiar to your heart—what is there in your dispositions or your conduct, by which you have ascertained the important fact? You think you are one of the elect. It may be so. But it may *not* be so. When the chances are so much against you, you cannot be certain of anything. It is, then, uncertain, whether you are destined to the enjoyment of unutterable and everlasting pleasure, or to the endurance of endless and inconceivable torments. You flatter yourself that the happy portion will be yours. But men easily flatter themselves. What if you should be buoying yourself with a delusive expectation? When such misery is at stake, when such misery impends, and when both are

shrouded in such awful uncertainty, how can you enjoy a moment's peace?

But, supposing that you are perfectly satisfied with regard to your own condition, are your anxieties confined to your own welfare, and do you care only for yourself? Are you a father? Are you a mother? Do you love your children, and do you really think of the doctrines you profess to believe? If so, how can you possibly be happy? In imagination I often accompany you into the bosom of your family. I see your eye rest with anxious fondness on your smiling babes. I see the tear start to it. I do not wonder at it. I should be less surprised did your tears unceasingly flow, and were your very hearts to break. That child, of whom you are so fond, whose innocence affects, and whose prattle delights you, what will be its eternal destiny? What uncertainty is there! What horror *may be* there! If, when you are in Abraham's bosom, you should look beyond the gulph which divides you, and behold it lifting up its eyes in torments, and imploring you in vain for a cup of cold water to quench its parched tongue—if you should know that this state of dreadful misery will be without end, and that its sufferings will answer no purpose, would heaven afford you the least enjoyment? Could you contemplate with complacency the author of its misery? Could you surround his throne with songs of praise, exclaiming, in grateful triumph, “Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth?”*

* Yes; there are persons in whom system has so completely subdued the feelings of humanity, that they have brought themselves to view this horrid picture with a steady gaze, to contemplate it with complacency—nay, even to affirm that it is beautiful and glorious.

It is impossible. Can doctrines which, if they are seriously thought of, must poison the sweetest sources of human felicity, convert heaven itself into a place of torment, and force every feeling mind to contemplate the Deity with horror, be founded in truth, or form a

“The Lamb of God shall roar as a lion against them : he shall excommunicate and cast them out of his presence for ever by a sentence from the throne, saying, ‘Depart from me, ye cursed.’ He shall adjudge them to everlasting fire, and the society of devils for evermore. And this sentence we suppose shall be pronounced with an audible voice, by the man Christ. And all the saints shall say, ‘*Hallelujah, true and righteous are his judgments.*’ None were so compassionate as the saints, when on earth, during the time of God’s patience. But, now that time is at an end, their compassion on the ungodly is swallowed up in joy, in the Mediator’s glory, and his executing of just judgment, by which his enemies are made his footstool. Though sometimes the righteous man did weep in secret places for their pride, and because they would not hear, yet then he ‘*shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance, he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.*’ Psalm lviii. 10. No pity shall then be shown to them from their nearest relations. The godly wife shall applaud the justice of the Judge, in the condemnation of her ungodly husband. The godly husband shall say Amen to the damnation of her who lay in his bosom. The godly parents shall say Hallelujah, at the passing of the sentence against their ungodly child, and the godly child shall, from his heart, approve the damnation of his wicked parents, the father who begat him, and the mother who bore him.”—*Boston’s Fourfold State*, state iv., head iv., sect. 9.

After this, can we wonder that system should have so perverted the understanding, as to lead it to approve of the infliction of pain, imprisonment, and death, for an adherence to what was conscientiously believed to be the truth, and so corrupted the heart, as to make it triumph in the subdual of its best feelings, which rose against the dreadful injustice and cruelty, as the noblest effort of heroic piety ? After this, will any one venture to maintain, that mere speculative opinions, as many persons term them, are of little importance ?

part of the revelation of the God of truth? It cannot be. Every serious and pious mind must rejoice to find that those expressions which occasionally occur in scripture, and which may at first sight seem to favor these frightful opinions, admit of a rational and consistent interpretation, without supposing their truth; while it abounds with many expressions which can have no meaning, and entire series of reasoning which can have no object, unless they are false.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE DOCTRINE OF LIMITED PUNISHMENT, TERMINATED BY DESTRUCTION.

MANY Christians of the highest reputation for wisdom and piety, in all ages of the church, have maintained that the wicked will neither be punished with endless misery, nor permitted to be happy at any period of their future being, but that they will be raised from the dead, afflicted with severe and lasting suffering, and then undergo death a second time, from which they will never be restored to conscious existence. This hypothesis, as it supposes the infliction of a degree of pain which is exactly proportioned in every case to the degree of guilt, and which is followed by the total and endless extinction of intelligence and life, is called the doctrine of Limited Punishment, terminated by destruction.

Many passages of scripture are conceived not only strongly to favor, but expressly to assert this opinion. It is true, that it is countenanced by the *sound* of several expressions which occur in the New Testament; but a careful examination of these terms will perhaps show that their genuine meaning is widely different from that which a less thorough investigation might seem to indicate, and that there is no foundation in scripture for this hypothesis.

1st. The advocate of this opinion, like the defenders

of the doctrine of Endless Misery, endeavor to establish it on the term, *aionios*, which they contend signifies endless duration; and some go so far as to maintain that it is invariably used in this sense, and that it never denotes a limited period.* But in opposition to those who plead for unending torment, they argue that punishment, not misery, is the substantive to which the adjective is applied—that there may be everlasting punishment without everlasting misery, and that the former, not the latter, is invariably threatened in the sacred writings. They maintain, however, that the word which is translated everlasting does signify duration without end.

It is not necessary to repeat here the observations which have been made upon this term. The evidence which has been adduced of its frequent acceptation in a limited sense appears to be irresistible; and though it must be admitted, that it does sometimes denote endless duration, yet it has been clearly shown, that this is the case only when the nature of the subject to which it is applied necessarily implies unending existence, and that then it derives the meaning of endless from the subject.

The word being in itself equivocal, and capable both of a limited and of an unlimited signification, the only question which can be agitated is whether, when applied to future punishment, it does or does not denote duration without end. If the affirmative be maintained, it must be shown that there is something in this subject which necessarily imparts to it the sense of

* See the Universal Restoration of Mankind Examined, &c. By Mr. JOHN MARSON. Vol. i., pp. 134, 135.

endless. Every argument founded upon it, unless this be premised, must be futile, and the advocate for the doctrine of destruction, in venturing to employ it, without first establishing this point, rests his hypothesis upon a term which makes as much against it as for it. But if, instead of being able to perform this task, his opponent can show that the reverse is true, and prove (as has been proved, pp. 154–160,) that the nature of punishment will not admit of this acceptance of the term, the controversy, as far as this word is concerned, must be considered as decided, in the opinion of every one who understands the principles of fair and legitimate reasoning.

2d. The advocates of the doctrine of destruction contend that those passages which affirm that the wicked shall *perish* or be *destroyed*, and that they shall suffer *death* or *destruction*, decidedly prove that they will be punished with the utter extinction of being. This argument is founded on the presumption that these expressions denote the endless loss of conscious existence. Few persons, perhaps, will rise from an investigation this point without a conviction, that there is no foundation whatever for this assumption.

Apollumi, the word commonly rendered to perish or destroy, occurs about ninety times in the New Testament. It is used in several different senses, as, to lose, to lose life, or to lose any thing—to kill or destroy temporally, and this is its most frequent signification; but it often means, also, *to render miserable*, and is used to denote *the infliction of pain or punishment*. Schleusner renders it *miserum reddo, pœnis afficio, molestiam ac indignationem creo alicui*. Romans, ii. 12—xiv. 15. 1 Corinthians, xv. 18.

Apoleia, generally translated death or destruction, occurs about twenty times in the New Testament. It sometimes signifies death, or temporal destruction—at others, injury, hurt, or calamity of any kind. Schleusner renders it unhappiness, any calamity or misery, and observes that it is especially used to denote *the divine punishment of offences, both in this and in a future life*. His words are, *infelicitas, omnis calamitas, miseria, et speciatim de pœnis divinis peccatorum et in hac et in futura vita usurpatur*. Matthew, vii. 13. Romans, ix. 12. Philippians, i. 28.

3d. The word *olethros*, commonly rendered destruction, signifies, also, *pain, misery, punishment*. Schleusner renders it *pœna, dolor, vexatio, cruciatus*. 1 Corinthians, v. 5, “Deliver such a one to Satan for the *destruction* of the flesh;” *eis olethron tes sarkos*, ut corpus crucietur et doloribus afficiatur. “Some bodily pain was inflicted, in order to produce repentance and reformation.”—*Simpson*. The application of *aionios* to this word, in 2 Thessalonians, i. 9, (“who shall be punished with everlasting destruction,”) cannot prove that this expression denotes the endless extinction of consciousness and life, because it has been shown that *olethros*, when affixed to the punishment of the guilty, means pain and suffering, and that *aionios* signifies, not proper eternity, but lasting duration.

4th. On the word *thanatos*, death, and the phrase, *deuteros thanatos*, the second death, the advocates of the doctrine of destruction lay the greatest stress. They contend that the strict and invariable meaning of death is the total extinction of consciousness and life—that the doctrine of the resurrection affords us the only satisfactory evidence we enjoy, that this extinction of being

will not be endless, and that, since the wicked are threatened with a second death, from which there is no promise of deliverance, we must conclude that their punishment will consist in absolute and irrecoverable destruction.

A little attention to the subject will probably show that the fundamental principle upon which this argument is founded is fallacious. *Thanatos* does not denote the endless extinction of conscious existence. It occurs in the New Testament in several different senses, but never *once* in this, when used concerning intelligent beings. When it relates to the guilty, it denotes, like the other terms which have been considered, *pain, punishment, suffering*. Schleusner observes that it signifies, 1st, Properly natural death, or the separation of the soul from the body, not occasioned by external violence. 2d, Violent death, or the punishment of death. 3d, Per metonymiam, quodvis gravius malum et periculum mortis. 4th, Pestis, morbus pestiferus. 5th, *Any kind of misery and unhappiness, but chiefly the punishment of wickedness, and of offences in this, as well as in a future life: omnis miseria et infelicitas, maxime quæ est vitiositatis et peccatorum pœna* in hac pariter ac in futura vita. 1 John, iii. 14. Romans, vii. 24. John, v. 24. Romans, i. 32.

It must be evident, then, that these words, when applied to future punishment, do not denote literal and absolute destruction, or the extinction of conscious existence, but the pain and suffering which will be inflicted upon the guilty, in consequence of their offences. By attaching this meaning to these terms, we render every passage in which they occur consistent with the general tenor of the language of the New

Testament, with the benevolent spirit of the gospel, and with the perfections of the Divine Being; but the argument attempted to be deduced from them, in favor of the doctrine of destruction, is founded merely on their sound, without regarding their real and scriptural meaning.

But, even were the fundamental principle upon which it is attempted to establish this hypothesis—namely, that death signifies the eternal extinction of consciousness and life—admitted, (though it has been proved to be false,) instead of supporting the doctrine of limited punishment, terminated by destruction, it would be fatal to it; for, if death denote, together with the disorganization of the corporeal frame, the utter extinction of the intellectual faculty, the wicked cannot be punished in a future state with great and protracted suffering, as this hypothesis teaches, because the moment which terminates their mortal existence must, according to this meaning of the term, put an eternal period to their being.

Should it be urged, that the scriptures affirm that the wicked shall awake from the sleep of death, and suffer the punishment due to their sins, it is obvious that this very argument proves, in the most decisive manner, that the meaning attempted to be affixed to the terms we are considering is not just, and establishes the important conclusion, that death is not the *endless* deprivation of life, nor destruction the *everlasting* extinction of the intellectual principle.

If it be contended, that we are assured that the wicked will undergo death again after their resurrection, and that we have no authority for supposing that they will be restored a second time to life, then the ground

of the argument is changed; it is made to depend entirely upon those expressions which either affirm or imply that the wicked will be punished with the second death; the controversy is thus brought into a very narrow compass.

With respect to the phrase, *deuteros thanatos*, the second death, it is obvious, that, were death really the *endless* extinction of organized and intelligent existence, the expression, *second* death, would be absurd; for there could be no second death, were the first absolute and eternal.

If it be just to give a literal interpretation to this phrase, it seems to warrant the conclusion that the wicked will die a second time; yet it is not *affirmed* that they will never rise again. Of the first resurrection we are certain, and we have no assurance that there will not be a second. There is no passage of scripture hostile to the conclusion that there will. Should it be inferred, that a second resurrection will *not* take place, because there is no express promise to authorise the expectation, it may with equal justice be concluded that there *will*, because it is not positively affirmed that there will not. Of these opposite inferences, the latter is at least as well founded as the former; nay, it is much more so, because the first is incompatible with some passages of scripture, but the second is contradicted by none, and is directly supported by several, particularly by those which speak of a first resurrection; for a first resurrection implies a second.

It is affirmed, 1 Corinthians, xv. 26, that the last enemy which shall be destroyed is death—that death is swallowed up in victory—that Jesus Christ has

abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel, 2 Timothy, i. 10. But if the second death be absolutely endless, or reduce the subjects of it to a state of total and eternal unconsciousness, death is not abolished; its duration is commensurate with eternity; it is not vanquished—it is the victor; it is not destroyed—it triumphs.

To the doctrine of destruction, as well as to that of endless misery, the great truth, that there will be a resurrection both of the just and of the unjust, is decidedly hostile. Who can believe that the benevolent Father of the human race will call the greater part of his creatures from the sleep of death, and reorganize the curious and beautiful structure in which intelligence and consciousness reside, on purpose to inflict upon them everlasting misery, or very protracted suffering, which will terminate in destruction? What a work does this doctrine assign to the beneficent Creator! How inconsistent with every perfection of his nature! How different this his second from his first creation!

From everything which we see and feel, it is evident that he intended to communicate happiness by bestowing the gift of life. Is it then possible to imagine that he will raise his creatures from the dead with no other view than to counteract his own design—that he will exert his omnipotence on purpose to frustrate the counsels of his benevolence?

This hypothesis involves the absurdity which has been often pointed out in the preceding pages. It supposes that the Deity restores millions of creatures to life for no other purpose than that of rendering them miserable, which is an act of cruelty of which we can form no adequate conception.

A resurrection to a state of pure, unmixed suffering, (which is the common notion of a state of punishment,) which lasts for a very protracted period, and terminates in destruction, must render the existence of these unhappy persons, upon the whole, a curse. If the Creator saw that any combination of circumstances would be attended with this consequence, he would either have prevented the occurrence of such a train of events, or have withheld the fiat which was about to call the sufferers into life. It has been proved, that every benevolent being would certainly do the one or the other. Either, therefore, there must be, even in the state of punishment, a greater prevalence of happiness than misery, which is contrary to the general idea of that state, or, if this be not the case, since it must render the existence of millions of creatures infinitely worse, upon the whole, than non-existence, it is irreconcilable with the divine benignity.

If, however, any advocate of the doctrine of destruction should affirm that he does not adopt this opinion of the state of punishment, but believes that at the winding up of the great drama of life, every intelligent being will have reason to bless his Creator for his existence, it is cheerfully admitted, that this argument does not apply against his hypothesis; but surely, while his heart glows with pleasure at the generous conclusion he adopts, he cannot but wish that his satisfaction could be perfected by the sight of pure, happy, and ever-improving intelligences, in the room of that awful and eternal blank which must press upon his view, and close the scene !*

* It affords me great satisfaction to perceive that this argument in favor of the doctrine of Universal Restoration, founded on the

Such are the arguments in favor of the doctrine of Limited Punishment, terminated by destruction; and such are the difficulties with which the hypothesis is encumbered. Every objection which is commonly urged, by intelligent persons, against the opinion that it is the great design of the divine government to bring all mankind to a state of perfect purity and happiness, whether derived from the doctrine of Endless Misery,

resurrection of the wicked, which I think extremely important, and even decisive of the controversy, impressed with equal force the mind of my much-respected friend, the late Dr. Estlin, of Bristol. I cannot reflect without pleasure on the conversations I enjoyed with him on this subject, at an early period of my life, and to which I owe, probably, much of that interest and zeal with which I have since pursued the inquiry. Intelligent, amiable, benevolent—admiring and loving the worthy and the wise, pitying, with Charity's own tenderness, the vicious—cheerful and diffusing cheerfulness, he lived—he died—THE CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHER. Part of the passage in his Discourses on Universal Restitution, which has led me to the mention of his name, (and who that knew him can refer to his name without paying it a tribute of respect?) I must allow myself the pleasure of quoting.

“It is proper to mention *two* doctrines, which, if they had been sufficiently adverted to, one would suppose the idea (of the final destruction of the wicked) could never have entered the human mind.”
 “The first is, that the wicked, without doubt, constitute *by far the greater part* of the human race. This truth, which, although it is reconcilable to *infinite* benevolence, yet to a heart which is susceptible of the finest *human* affections, is, after all, a most painful consideration, *cannot* be evaded. The voice of infallibility hath spoken it; the elevated standard of Christian morality, compared with the general moral state of mankind, confirms it; every analogy of nature points out to it. ‘Enter ye in at the *strait* gate; for *wide* is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat; because *strait* is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and *few* there be that find it.’

or from that of total and eternal destruction, has now been fully considered. With regard to the doctrine of Endless Misery, it has been shown that the terms, everlasting, eternal, for ever, for ever and ever, &c., on which it is chiefly founded, do not denote duration without end, but only a lasting period—that, even if it could be proved that these expressions, when applied to the subject of future punishment, must necessarily

“The next doctrine, which must not be forgotten, (I confess I found myself inclined to give it up, when I saw clearly that the doctrine of Annihilation could not be maintained in consistency with it,) *is the resurrection of the wicked*. If the scriptures had *positively asserted* that the wicked would *not* rise, and that their death would be the final extinction of their being, the mind must have *acquiesced* in what—reasoning from the infinite benevolence of God, the best foundation of reasoning—it would still have acknowledged a difficulty. If the scriptures had said nothing on the subject, their resurrection and restoration to virtue and happiness might, I think, have been inferred from the same sure and certain principles. They do not, however, leave any room for doubt on the subject. It is *expressly* said, ‘All that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth: they that have done good to the resurrection of life, they that have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation.’ Every account which is given in scripture of the day of judgment confirms this.

“The doctrine of Annihilation, then, supposes that by far the greater part of mankind were created by a benevolent and holy Being, whose prescience foresaw how they would act, to be vicious and die, to be raised from the dead, re-organized and re-created, to be *miserable*, and then to undergo a public execution, by which they would be forever blotted out of this creation. Some of the wisest and best men that the world ever produced have adopted this scheme of the origin, progress, and end of the divine dispensation. I know we are apt to *overlook* the fate of this *immense multitude*; and a most baneful effect upon the human mind, upon all the institutions of society, and particularly upon penal jurisprudence, has this over-

be taken in the sense of endless, it would by no means warrant the conclusion, that the wicked will be kept alive in misery through the ages of eternity ; because it is everlasting punishment, not everlasting torment, with which the wicked are threatened—that the application of the same term to the duration of the punishment of the wicked, and the happiness of the righteous, by no means proves that both are of equal continuance ; because this word denotes different degrees of duration, when applied to different subjects—because the nature of these two subjects is not only not the same, but directly opposite, and because many considerations prove that one of these states will be truly everlasting, but that the other cannot be so—that the argument derived from the metaphor of fire, and particularly from the expres-

looking of what *others*, even the majority, suffer. My brethren, if the fact be so, fix your minds upon it. You have often regarded with admiration that curious effect of the divine power, the human body—the delicate structure of the eye and the ear, the nerves and brain, the veins and arteries, and the various organs of sensation, respiration, and motion ; you have contemplated with devout wonder the faculties of the human mind ; you have acknowledged with grateful satisfaction, that God is love—that every organ, that every power, both of body and mind, is an inlet to enjoyment, and that man was formed in the image of God, that he might be the object of his favor for ever. Contemplate the scene which is now to take place. What a process is going on through nature ! Myriads of those beings are to be raised from the dead, that is, re-organized, re-formed, or re-created, (a work to which Omnipotence alone is equal, for the laws of nature are nothing but the mode of operation of the God of nature,) to be miserable in a greater or less degree, according to their degrees of guilt, and at length to be finally destroyed by fire ! The mind cannot dwell on this idea !”—*Discourses on Universal Restitution, delivered to the Society of Protestant Dissenters in Lewin's Mead, Bristol.* By JOHN PRIOR ESTLIN, LL.D., pp. 82–87.

sion, unquenchable fire, is totally fallacious, because this language is used respecting fires which have been extinguished for ages, and respecting places which have since flourished, and which are still in existence—that the sin against the Holy Ghost, which has been deemed so decisive a proof of this doctrine, directly confutes it, since it affords the most satisfactory evidence, that expressions of this kind do not and cannot denote duration without end, and since the punishment annexed to this crime may be inflicted to the very letter without its being endless—that those minor arguments, which are deduced from some expressions and parables of scripture, are insufficient to establish the doctrine, while some of them afford powerful arguments against it, and that the same is true of the reasonings by which many persons have endeavored to support it.

With regard to the doctrine of Limited Punishment, terminated by destruction, it has been shown that it is founded solely on terms to which an unscriptural meaning is affixed—that, while it professes to be established on the plain and positive declarations of scripture, it is countenanced chiefly by a phrase which occurs only in the most highly figurative book of the New Testament, and amid expressions entirely metaphorical—that this very phrase affords it no other support than what can be derived from an inference which is so extremely equivocal, that the opposite conclusion may be deduced with equal plausibility, and that, while there is not a single passage in which the doctrine is expressed in clear and precise terms, there are many with which it is utterly incompatible.

All the objections which are commonly urged against the cheering and benevolent doctrine, that the whole

human race will be ultimately restored to purity and happiness, having been thus fully considered, the mind may now be prepared to enter on an examination of the scriptural evidence which appears to favor it.

Part Fourth.

OF THE SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE IN FAVOR OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE FINAL RESTORATION OF ALL MANKIND TO PURITY AND HAPPINESS.

It is admitted that the term, Universal Restoration, no where occurs in the Old or New Testament. It has been adopted in this work merely for the sake of brevity and precision. The doctrine of the scriptures is, that God is the Ruler of the world—that every event is under his direction, and promotes in its appointed measure the purposes of his wise and benevolent administration—that the natural and moral evil which prevail are the instruments which his wisdom has chosen, no less than the more obvious blessings of existence, to promote the highest advantage of his intelligent creatures—that, by his almighty and all-perfect superintendence of events, he will secure this result—that he has placed mankind in a state of discipline, in order to form and to try their characters—that those who improve their present advantages, will be rewarded after death with endless felicity—that those who neglect and abuse them, and incapacitate themselves for pure enjoyment, will be placed under a painful and lasting discipline, which

will correct their evil dispositions and vicious habits, and form in their minds a genuine love of excellence—that, in order to accomplish these benevolent purposes, he has raised up Jesus Christ, whom he has specially and miraculously qualified to execute the most important of them, having with this view revealed to him the glorious gospel, and commissioned him to declare it to the world—that, in reward of the firmness and fidelity with which he executed this most momentous trust, notwithstanding the danger and suffering to which it exposed him, God has highly exalted him, and made him the medium through which he communicates the greatest blessings to mankind—that, as Jesus revealed the gospel, so he will fulfil its promises and execute its threatenings—that, as he was the Instructor of mankind, so he will be their Judge—that to him is committed the direction of the state of discipline to which the wicked will be consigned—that, as the execution of the purposes which are comprehended in this vast and benevolent plan, supposes the government of innumerable intelligent beings, and the superintendence of many great and important events, it is termed a kingdom, of which he is said to be the Head—that he will conduct the government of this kingdom with perfect wisdom, until it shall have accomplished all the purposes for which it is appointed; until it shall have extirpated sin, destroyed the consequence of it, death, restored universal purity, and produced universal happiness—that then, being no longer necessary, he will resign his office, restore to him from whom he received it the power with which he was invested, in order that the great Sovereign of earth and heaven, the Fountain of all being and happiness, may himself “be all in all.”

Such is the glorious consummation of the divine dispensations, which the scriptures teach us to expect ! Such are the sublime and cheering truths, the evidence of which is now to be detailed !

The principle on which the following investigation of scripture is conducted, and on which it is concluded that the passages which will be cited express or imply these truths, is that which is adopted in the most exact inquiries to which the human understanding is directed. In every philosophical inquiry, it is admitted that that hypothesis ought to be adopted, which accounts for all the phenomena with the greatest clearness, and which is attended with the fewest difficulties. Whatever theory best explains acknowledged facts, is universally considered most entitled to regard ; and, if it solve the several phenomena easily and simply, while every other hypothesis is attended with contradictions and absurdities, no doubt is entertained of its truth. Now the doctrine, that all mankind will ultimately be restored to purity and happiness, is this perfect theory, with regard to the divine dispensations, and the scriptural terms by which their nature is expressed. It accords with *every* expression that is used in scripture concerning the state of mankind in the world to come, and it is confirmed by *all* our best sentiments of the attributes, the providence, and the government of the Supreme Being. But the notions of Endless Misery, and of the total and eternal extinction of intelligence and life, neither accord with *all* the expressions of scripture relative to a future state, nor with our purest and most exalted sentiments of the attributes and proceedings of the Universal Parent. According to the strictest rules

of philosophizing, therefore, the first must be regarded as the true hypothesis.

The passages of scripture which favor the opinion, that the whole human race will finally be restored to purity and happiness, may be divided into those which imply its truth, and into those which appear precisely and positively to affirm it.

The passages which imply it, are those which contain certain declarations which must be false if this opinion be denied, but which are full of truth and beauty if it be admitted. The passages which appear positively to affirm it, are those to the language of which it seems impossible to affix any other meaning.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE WHICH IMPLY THAT
ALL MANKIND WILL BE ULTIMATELY RESTORED TO
PURITY AND HAPPINESS.

UNDER the passages which imply the ultimate restoration of the whole human race to virtue and happiness may be arranged—

1st. All those which speak of God as the kind and benevolent Father of mankind.

Psalm ciii. 13, 14, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him; for he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust."—Malachi, ii. 10, "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?"—Ephesians, iv. 6, "There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all." We are likewise instructed by our Lord, Matthew, vi. 9, to address the Supreme Being in prayer as our Father.

The scriptures delight to exhibit the Deity to his human offspring in the character of a Father. It is the most natural, as well as the most endearing manner in which we can conceive of him. He is our Father in a much more strict and intimate sense than any creature is the parent of another. He constructed the curious and delicate fabric in which our consciousness and intelligence reside. He formed those wonderful organs which are continually at work within us, and

which minister equally to life and to enjoyment. He endowed us with those noble faculties by which we are capable of pursuits and pleasures of the same nature with those that constitute his own happiness, the operation of which affords us continual gratification, but of which we know nothing, except that they are wonderful and glorious. It is he who has so exquisitely adapted our nature to the objects which surround us, that we can scarcely move without experiencing pleasure, and that so many things which interest and delight us continually crowd upon our senses. It is he who has made us what we are, and his constant energy is necessary to continue us in existence. In the strictest sense it is true, that, "in him we live, move, and have our being."

And, as he is so much more intimately and truly our Father than our human parents, so he must be as much more perfectly so in respect to the disposition with which he regards, and the manner in which he treats us. All that is tender and endearing in the most affectionate and excellent of human parents can afford us but a faint image of what he is to his whole family of mankind.

Does any good father punish with revenge? Does any tender mother harbor implacable resentment against her child? Would she, if she were able, punish it with endless misery, or inflict upon it intolerable anguish for a very protracted period, and then blot it out of existence?

If a human parent who acted in such a manner would be regarded with universal execration, who can believe an hypothesis which attributes such conduct to the benevolent Father of men? We may be mistaken

in the meaning of a word, or the accuracy of a criticism, but we cannot err in rejecting opinions which give such an exhibition of the character of God. But in this manner both the doctrines of Endless Misery, and of absolute, irrevocable destruction, represent our heavenly Father as treating the greater number of his children, while that of Universal Restoration teaches that his conduct towards every individual of his large family is infinitely more excellent than that of the most wise and benevolent parent. The latter opinion, therefore, is true ; the others are false.

2d. The ultimate restoration of the whole human race to purity and happiness is favored by all those passages which represent God as *good*.

Psalm xxxiv. 8, "O taste and see that the Lord is *good*." liii. 2, "The goodness of God *endureth continually*." cxlv. 9, "The Lord is good *to all*, and his tender mercies are over *all his works*."—1 John, iv. 8, "GOD IS LOVE."

If there be any foundation for the Doctrine of Endless Misery, or of absolute, irrevocable destruction, these passages are not true. The doctrine of Endless Misery teaches that God created the great majority of mankind to make them miserable—that he called them into being with no other view than to glorify his justice by their eternal condemnation, and that from all eternity he fore-ordained them to this horrid fate. To say of such a Being, that he is good, that his very nature is love, that his tender mercies are over all his works, and that his goodness endureth continually, is to destroy all distinction between tenderness and cruelty, and to identify malevolence with benignity.

If it be said that he treats the elect with benevolence,

and that these expressions relate only to these favored individuals, it is replied, that this is an assumption which is unsupported by the shadow of proof; for these passages do not affirm that he is good to the elect, but that he is good to *all*, and that his tender mercies are over *all his works*.

If he elected a few individuals to happiness, and decreed the great majority to endless misery, how can there be any truth in the declaration, that he is good to all? And if the greater number are to be doomed to torment, day and night, without intermission, for ever—if, in the anguish of their souls, they incessantly cry to him for mercy, beseeching him to lighten or shorten their suffering, and if he behold their misery without pity, and turn a deaf ear to their supplications, how can his *tender mercies* be over ALL his works, or his goodness endure continually?

Nor is the doctrine of destruction consistent with these passages; for according to this opinion the wicked will be raised from the dead, afflicted with terrible and unremitted anguish, for a very protracted period, and then blotted out of existence for ever; so that, upon the whole, they must be incalculably more miserable than happy. Even if the contrary should be maintained, and it should be said that they will enjoy more than they suffer, still, according even to this concession, these passages can be true only in the lowest sense.

But, if the Deity design and pursue the ultimate felicity of all his intelligent creation, what a light and glory do they shed on his character, and how perfectly do they accord with the noblest ideas we can form of the object of his dispensations!

3d. The final restoration of all mankind to purity

and happiness is favored by those passages which speak of God as *merciful*.

Exodus, xxxiv. 6, 7, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, and forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin."—2 Chronicles, xxx. 9, "The Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you if you return unto him."—Psalm ciii. 8, "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy."

These repeated declarations of the compassion and clemency of God cannot be true, if through the ages of eternity he refuses to be reconciled to the great majority of his creatures. It is vain to endeavor to prove that he is merciful, on the ground that he is willing to forgive the penitent sinner in the present state; for—not to mention that, if there be any truth in the common doctrine of the divine decrees and of election, the pretension is an idle mockery—were his clemency restricted to this life, he would have infinitely less claim to the character of merciful, than that man would possess who should inflict the most intolerable suffering on another, for the space of eighty years, without showing any disposition to relent, except for a single hour. There is, indeed, an utter disproportion between the two cases, because this life, compared to eternity, is inconceivably less than an hour compared to eighty years.

They who contend that the mercy of God is restricted to the present life ought to remember that they have no scriptural authority for this opinion. Such a notion is never inculcated in the Old or New Testament.

There is not a single passage from which it can be fairly deduced. Those which might seem to favor it have been fully considered. The declarations of scripture are not, "The Lord is merciful and gracious, but his clemency is limited to the present state. He is slow to anger and plenteous in mercy, but he becomes implacable and inexorable the moment this life terminates ;"—its language is, "The Lord is merciful and gracious ; slow to anger and plenteous in mercy ; he hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities ; for as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy towards them that fear him ; as far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear him ; for he knoweth our frame ; he remembereth that we are dust."

If he place his offending offspring under a discipline which corrects their evil dispositions, and forms in their hearts a genuine love of excellence, this beautiful and affecting description of the Deity is just ; but if he doom them to intolerable, unremitted, and unending anguish, or if, after having made them suffer the utmost penalty of their crimes, he blot them out of existence for ever, every syllable of it is false !

4th. The ultimate happiness of every individual of the human race is favored by all those passages which positively deny that God will be *angry for ever*.

Psalm xxx. 5, "His anger endureth but for a moment." ciii. 9, "He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever." lxxvii. 7-12, "Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will he be favorable no more ? Is his mercy clean gone for ever ; doth his

promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious; hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? And I said, This is my infirmity: I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High; I will remember the works of the Lord. I will meditate on thy work, and talk of thy doings." Isaiah, lvii. 16, "I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made."

How different is this description of the disposition and conduct of the Deity from that which is exhibited by the doctrines of Endless Misery, and of total and eternal destruction! They affirm that his anger will flame with relentless fury through all eternity; the scriptures declare that his anger endureth but for a moment. They affirm that the punishment which he will inflict will never terminate; the scriptures declare that he will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger for ever. They affirm that he will hereafter have no mercy on the wicked, but cast them from him for ever; the scriptures make the most solemn and touching appeal to our own understanding and heart, whether this can be true:—"Will the Lord cast off for ever, and will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? And I said, This is my infirmity!"

These words ought to be engraven on the heart. To say that they relate solely to offenders in the present life is to take for granted the point in dispute, and to affirm what cannot be proved. Is not this language as applicable to future as it is to present punishment—to

the chastisement of the wicked, as to the correction of him who has fallen from rectitude? With regard to the former, does it not equally put to us the affecting questions, "Will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore?" No; it is impossible. Whoever shall attempt to persuade me that there can come a period when he will eternally shut up in anger his tender mercies, I will repeat to him this passage: I will say, "It is your infirmity!"

5th. The final restoration of all mankind to purity and happiness is favored by those passages which represent God as declaring that he takes no pleasure in the punishment of the wicked.

Ezekiel, xviii. 23, "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways and live?" Chronicles, xxxiii. 11, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked should turn from his ways and live." 2 Peter, iii. 9, "The Lord is long-suffering towards us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

The doctrine of Endless Misery teaches that, from all eternity, God, for the praise of his glorious justice, decreed the great majority of his creatures to irremediable and eternal death; yet the scriptures represent him as contradicting this in the most express terms, and in the most solemn manner: *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked should turn from his ways and live.*

Revelation, iv. 11, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power, for thou hast

created all things, and by thy will, or for thy pleasure, they are and were created."

What cause can there be for an ascription of praise to their Creator, on the part of the greater number of his creatures, if, millions of ages before their existence, he doomed them to intolerable and endless misery? Could any one who believed such a doctrine speak in this rapturous manner of the work of creation? But what a delightful meaning is there in this language, and what abundant cause is there for praise, if all intelligent beings are ultimately to be restored to purity and happiness! Then, indeed, may it be said of the Author of this glorious scheme, "Thou art worthy to receive glory, and honor, and power!"

6th. The final restoration of all mankind to purity and happiness, is favored by those passages which represent the Deity as chastising his children with the disposition of a parent, and by those which affirm or imply that future punishment will be corrective.

Deuteronomy, viii. 5, "Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." Job, v. 17, "Happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore, despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty." Psalm xciv. 12, "Blessed, O Lord, is the man whom thou chastenest." Hebrews, xii. 5-11, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and

not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not rather be in subjection to the Father of Spirits, and live? For they verily, for a few days, chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."

These passages declare, in the strongest and plainest language, that God chastens his creatures in the same manner as a wise and benevolent parent corrects his child. Those who maintain that this is true only of the virtuous, or that he treats the wicked in this manner in the present life alone, must conceive that he is the Father only of a part of mankind, or that a period will arrive, when his treatment of his children will be unworthy of a good parent.

And why should either of these suppositions be entertained? We are too apt to exclude the vicious from our benevolent regard, and to consider and treat them as utterly worthless. This pernicious feeling is even transferred to the great Parent of the human race. But the vicious can never become utterly worthless, because they always retain their moral capacity and their sentient nature. So long as they are capable of knowledge and virtue, they are fit objects of moral discipline; so long as they retain the power of feeling, and can suffer pain or enjoy happiness, they are proper objects of benevolence. A false system of philosophy, a selfish and exclusive system of theology, may make us forgetful of these unalterable and imperishable claims upon

our best affections, which all of human kind possesses; but he cannot overlook them, who is the Creator of all, and who cares alike for every individual of his large family. It is the faculty of reason that renders a creature a proper object of moral discipline; it is the capacity of suffering and of enjoying that renders him a proper object of benevolence; and these even vice itself cannot destroy. However, therefore, the condition of the wicked may be changed in the future state, it cannot be changed to this extent—to the extent, that is, of rendering them no longer the objects of moral discipline, which must be the case, if their punishment be not corrective, or to the extent of excluding them from the care of benevolence, since they must retain their sentient nature. To suppose, therefore, that a period can ever come, when the punishment of the erring creatures of humanity will not be corrective, and when the benevolent Father of those creatures will cease to regard them with a Father's tenderness, is both without reason and contrary to reason.

Matthew, xxv. 46, “These shall go away into lasting chastisement, but the righteous into life eternal.”

The word translated punishment, in the received version, is *kolasis*, a term which is universally allowed to signify chastisement or corrective punishment. It is used in this sense by the heathen philosophers: “Dice-mus ergo in poenis respiciant utilitatem ejus qui peccarit, aut ejus cujus intererat non peccatum esse, aut indistincte quorumlibet. Ad horum trium finum primum pertinet poena quæ philosophis, modo *nouthesia*, modo *kolasis*, modo *parainesis*, dicitur. Paulo jurisconsulto, poena quæ constituitur in emendationem, *sophroniseos*

eneka, Platone, Plutarcho *iatreia psuches*, animi medicatrix, quæ hoc agit ut eum qui peccavit reddat meliorem medendi modo qui est per contraria."*—*Grotius de Jure Belli et Pacis*, lib. ii., cap. xx., sect. 6.

Simpson observes on this word, "Our Lord, in the awful and impressive description of the proceedings of the last judgment of mankind, has selected the term *kolasis*, in no other place in the New Testament applied to the future state, in order to explain with the greater precision the final recompense of the sinner. There seems, in Matthew, xxv. 46, to be an evident allusion to the Septuagint translation of Daniel, xii. 2, which was commonly used in Judea when our Lord appeared. The expression, *zoen aionion*, is literally adopted in order to express the recompense of the righteous. But, instead of *aischunen aionion*, the expression, *kolasin aionion*, appears to have been purposely substituted, as comprehending that variety of painful chastisements, both in kind, and degree, and duration, which the highest ideas of the perfections of the Supreme Parent and Ruler naturally lead us to suppose he will inflict upon his children and subjects, according to the nature and magnitude of their offences. Even in human governments, a wise and good magis-

* We observe, then, that punishment regards the benefit either of the offender or the offended, or, indeed, of any other persons. The punishment which respects the first of these three purposes is called by philosophers sometimes *nouthesia*, sometimes *kolasis*, and sometimes *parainesis*. According to Paulus, a lawyer, the punishment designed for amendment is by Plato said to be *sophroniseos eneka*, for the sake of making wiser. And it is called by Plutarch, *iatreia psuches*, the healer of the mind; because, agreeable to the art of healing, it renders him who has sinned better by means of contraries.

trate would employ temporary corrective chastisements for the reformation of criminals, that they might be restored to usefulness and happiness in society, in preference to capital punishments, if he could devise proper ones, and secure success in the use of them. Now, with respect to the Supreme Lord and Parent of all, there is unerring wisdom to contrive infallible means, boundless goodness to incline him to employ them, and almighty power to accomplish every end that infinite perfection proposes."*

7th. The final purity and happiness of all mankind is favored by those passages which represent the benefits resulting from the obedience and death of Christ as co-extensive with, and even exceeding, the evils produced by the disobedience and fall of Adam.

1 Corinthians, xv. 22, "As through Adam *all* die, so likewise through Christ shall *all* be made alive." In this passage, the evil produced by sin is compared with the benefit received by Christ, and it supposes that the life imparted by him is a blessing; but, if the wicked are to be raised from the slumber of the tomb, only to be visited with severe and protracted punishment, and then destroyed, or to be kept in endless misery, the restoration of their existence, instead of a benefit, is an unspeakable disadvantage.

Romans, v. 15, "That as the offence, so is the free gift; for if, through the offence of one, *oi polloi*, the many (that is, *the great body of mankind—Newcome*,) have died, much more in the favor of God, and the gift which is through the favor of one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded, *eis tous pollous*, unto the many. If, by the offence of the one, death reigned by this one, much

* Essay, p. 68.

more those who receive the abounding of favor, and of the gift of justification, shall reign in life by the one man Jesus Christ. So then, as, by the offence of one, judgment came upon *all men* to condemnation, so likewise, by the righteousness of one, the free gift hath come upon *all men* to justification of life. For as, by the disobedience of one man, the many were made sinners, (or treated as such, by undergoing death,) so likewise, by the obedience of one, the many will be made righteous; that, where sin abounded, the favor of God has much more abounded; that, as sin reigned unto death, so favor likewise might reign by justification to everlasting life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Nothing can be more evident, than that it is the apostle's intention, in this passage, to represent all mankind, without exception, as deriving greater benefit from the death of Christ, than they suffer injury from the fall of Adam. The universality of the apostle's expressions is very remarkable. The same many, who were made sinners by the disobedience of the one, are made righteous by the obedience of the other. If *all men* are condemned by the offence of the one, *the same all* are justified by the righteousness of the other.

These universal terms, so frequently repeated and so variously diversified, cannot possibly be reconciled to the limitation of the blessings of the gospel to the elect alone, or to a part only of the human race.* Unless the wicked are reformed by their punishment, can there be any truth in the declaration, that the favor of God by Christ abounds much more than sin and death? If the great majority of mankind are to continue in sin and misery through all eternity, or at

* See Improved Version, note in loc.

some remote period to be blotted out of existence, it is they that triumph. They are infinitely more extensive than the abounding of favor. According to both of these doctrines, therefore, the reasoning of the apostle in this passage is totally inconclusive.

The passages which have been quoted appear decidedly to favor the doctrine of the ultimate restoration of all mankind to purity and happiness, since in every case a denial of this opinion is a contradiction of the declarations they contain. There are passages, however, which seem still more expressly to confirm the truth of this hypothesis.

CHAPTER II.

OF THE PASSAGES OF SCRIPTURE WHICH APPEAR EXPRESSLY TO AFFIRM THAT ALL MANKIND WILL BE ULTIMATELY RESTORED TO PURITY AND HAPPINESS.

IN the former editions of this work, some passages were arranged under this head, which, on further examination, I am satisfied cannot be justly adduced as express affirmations of the doctrine, that the whole human race will finally be restored to virtue and happiness. I consider the celebrated passage in Ephesians, i. 8-10, as probably, though not certainly, asserting it: "Having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself, concerning the dispensation of the fulness of times, that he would gather together to himself in one all things through Christ, which are in the heavens and which are on the earth, even through him." At first view, this passage seems exceedingly favorable to the opinion, and appears, indeed, expressly to affirm, that it is the great object of the divine dispensations to unite together, in one holy and happy state, all intelligent beings under Jesus Christ. But many learned and enlightened men propose a different interpretation. They suppose that this passage relates to God's pre-determination to comprehend Gentiles as well as Jews in the blessings of the gospel dispensation. "The inter-

pretation of the ancient fathers," says Whitby, "seems to give this sense, that God hath, by this dispensation, gathered under one head, viz., Christ, the head of the church, all things on earth—that is, Jews and Gentiles—and all things in heaven, Christ being the head over principalities and powers." Locke's paraphrase of this and of the four preceding verses is as follows ; "Having predetermined to take us Gentiles, by Jesus Christ, to be his sons and people, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the end, that the Gentiles too might praise him for his grace and mercy to them and all mankind, magnifying his glory for his abundant goodness to them, by receiving them freely into the kingdom of the Messiah, to be his people again, in a state of peace with him, barely for the sake of him that is his beloved, in whom we have redemption by his blood, viz., the forgiveness of transgressions, according to the greatness of his grace and favor, which he has overflowed in towards us, in bestowing on us so full a knowledge and comprehension of the extent and design of the gospel, and prudence to comply with it, as it becomes you, in that he hath made known to you the good pleasure of his will and purpose, which was a mystery that he hath purposed in himself, until the coming of the due time of that dispensation wherein he hath predetermined to reduce all things again, both in heaven and on earth, under one head in Christ." By the phrase, "things in heaven and things on earth," he understands the Jewish and Gentile world, observing, "That St. Paul should use heaven and earth for Jews and Gentiles, will not be thought so very strange, if we consider that Daniel himself expresses the nation of the Jews by the name of heaven. Daniel, viii. 10.

Nor does he want an example of it in our Saviour himself, who, Luke, xxi. 26, by "powers of heaven," plainly signifies the great men of the Jewish nation; nor is this the only place, in this epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians, which will bear this interpretation of heaven and earth. He who shall read the fifteen first verses of chap. iii., and carefully weigh the expressions, and observe the drift of the apostle in them, will not find that he does manifest violence to St. Paul's sense, if he understands by "the family in heaven and earth," ver. 15, the united body of Christians, made up of Jews and Gentiles, living still promiscuously among those two sorts of people, who continued in their unbelief. However, this interpretation I am not positive in, but offer it as a matter of inquiry to such who think an impartial search into the true meaning of the sacred scripture the best employment of all the time they have.

Mr. Belsham says,* "Perhaps the sense of this intricate period may be thus expressed: Which riches of his goodness he has abundantly exhibited to us, having enriched our understanding with a clear knowledge of that mystery which was the object of his gracious and eternal purpose, and which relates to that dispensation which has now at the fulness of time taken place, namely, that he would reunite† under one head, even Jesus Christ, all descriptions of mankind, whether Jews or Gentiles."

* See Belsham on the Epistles of Paul, in loc.

† The primary signification of the word *auakephalio*, which the apostle here uses, is to sum up an account, or to reduce many sums to one.—*Schleusner*.—And the phrase, "all things," signifies all persons, the neuter being put for the masculine, as in John, vi. 39. *Ut nempe omnes creaturæ intelligentes in cælo et in terra, per Christum in unam societatem adducrentur*.—*Rosenmuller*.

Although, if the above interpretation be just, this passage cannot be considered as bearing that positive and decided testimony to the truth, that all mankind will be ultimately restored to purity and happiness, which some learned men have supposed, yet it does not weaken that testimony so much as might at first be apprehended; for, even admitting that the apostle meant by the phrase, "things in heaven and things on earth," Jews and Gentiles, yet it deserves to be borne in mind, that these expressions include all mankind, since, in the apostle's view, Jews and Gentiles would comprehend the whole of the human race, there being no descriptions of persons which would not be classed by him under one or other of these divisions. Mr. Locke's own paraphrase of the 6th verse is, "To the end that *all mankind* might magnify his glory for his abundant goodness to them." If the Jews and Gentiles include all mankind, how far does the interpretation suggested by Mr. Locke limit the sense of the passage? May it not still be understood to declare not only that under the gospel dispensation Jews and Gentiles are admitted to equal privileges, but also that it is the gracious purpose of God to restore all mankind to a state of perfect virtue and happiness, and thus to unite all under one head, namely, Jesus Christ? This passage must be understood to refer to some future change, universal in its extent, and happy in its consequences; for at no period since the advent of the Messiah have these been united together in one under him. All do not, and never have acknowledged his mild and benevolent sway. Sin and misery still dispute and always have disputed the government of the world with him. But are we not by this passage encouraged to believe that,

in the dispensation of the fullness of times, every disposition which opposes him shall be destroyed, and that, different as men's character and condition may be at present, they shall all then become his willing subjects, and be rendered holy and happy? And, as Christ will be the means of effecting this glorious work, may not all mankind in this sense be said to be gathered together in one under him? If there be no reason for restricting this passage to a more limited signification, does not this sense best accord with the diffusively-benevolent spirit of the gospel, with the character of God as the kind Father and wise Governor of mankind, and with many other passages of scripture? However, in the language of that great man and excellent Christian, whose words on a similar occasion have just been cited, and, I trust, with something of the spirit with which he wrote them, I would say, that of this interpretation I would not be positive, but "offer it as a matter of inquiry to such who think an impartial search into the true meaning of the sacred scripture the best employment of all the time they have."

The same observations I would apply to the similar passage, Colossians, i. 19, 20. "It hath pleased the Father, that in him all fullness should dwell, and, having made peace through his blood shed on the cross, that by him he would RECONCILE ALL THINGS TO HIMSELF; that is, all intelligent creatures."—*Newcome*. "By him, I say, whether they be things on earth or things in heaven." It is highly probable that the phrase, "things on earth or things in heaven," signifies Gentiles and Jews. But, since Gentiles and Jews comprehend all mankind, it seems just to take this passage in its most extensive sense, and to consider it as affirming,

that it has pleased the Father to appoint Jesus Christ to be the great instrument of reconciling to himself the whole human race. And, if this be so, how can the intention of the Father be accomplished, if the greater number of human beings remain for ever at enmity with him, and execrate his name through all eternity, or if they are blotted out of existence because a reconciliation could not be effected between them ?

That remarkable passage in Romans, v. 12-21, has already been considered in the last chapter ; but it must be again brought under review in this. "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and thus death hath passed upon all men, in as much as all have sinned : (for until the law, sin was in the world ; but sin is not imputed when there is no law : nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a resemblance [a type] of him that was to come : yet the free gift likewise is not so, as was the offence ; for if through the offence of one, many have died, much more the favor of God, and the gift which is through the favor of one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. Neither is the gift so, as it was by one who sinned ; for the judgment was of one offence to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences to justification. For if, by the offence of one, death reigned by one, much more those who receive the abounding of favor and of the gift of justification will reign in life by one, even Jesus Christ.) So, then, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation ; so, likewise, by the righteousness of one, the free gift hath come upon all men to justification of life. For as by the disobe-

dience of one many were made sinners, so, likewise, by the obedience of one many will be made just. Now the law entered in privily, so that offences abounded. But where sin abounded, the favor of God hath much more abounded; that as sin hath reigned through death, so favor likewise might reign by justification to everlasting life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

In this passage, all men are said to have been made mortal by the offence of Adam, and here the phrase, "all men," must necessarily be understood to signify every individual of the human race. Though the style of the apostle in this passage is remarkably intricate and perplexed, yet his meaning is clear, and can scarcely be misunderstood. He affirms that sin entered into the world by Adam, and that, in consequence of his offence, death passed upon all men, or all men became mortal. Thus many were made sinful or mortal by one. In this sense, Adam was a type of Jesus Christ; for, as all mankind became subject to great privation and suffering, in consequence of the offence of one, namely, Adam, so the greatest privileges and blessings are bestowed upon all mankind in consequence of the obedience of one, namely, Jesus Christ. But it is only in this single circumstance, that all suffer and all are benefited by one, that there is any analogy between them; for in every other respect there is the greatest possible difference between Adam and Christ. The act entailing such important consequences upon the whole human race was on the part of Adam an act of transgression—on the part of Christ an act of obedience. And there is a still further disparity between them; for the calamities resulting from the acts of transgression were the legal punishment of the offence; but

the blessings accruing from the act of obedience were not such as could be claimed by law, but were the free, unpurchased, unmerited gift of God. And the consequences of the act of transgression and the act of obedience may be placed in still more striking contrast; for the act of transgression was but one, and yet death, with all the calamities connected with it, passed upon the whole human race, while the act of obedience provides justification for many offences. Nor is this all; for the blessings procured for mankind by the obedience of Christ are unspeakably greater than the calamities brought upon them by the offence of Adam.

This is undoubtedly the argument of the apostle. Notwithstanding all the obscurity and perplexity of his language, whoever reads the passage with attention must perceive that these are the ideas which were in his mind. And in the whole compass of Christian truth there is no doctrine more important or more glorious than that which is thus disclosed. It is a direct and positive declaration, that the blessings provided by the obedience of Christ shall, in the number of persons who partake of them, be coextensive with the calamities produced by the offence of Adam, and in their magnitude and value shall greatly exceed them. This is sufficient; this is decisive. These ideas were in the mind of the apostle. This is the doctrine which he plainly and indisputably teaches, and nothing more is necessary; for, even though it should be proved, that he illustrates his doctrine by a fanciful allusion to what was itself only an allegory—that his reasoning is not in every respect complete, and even that he did not himself fully comprehend all the glorious consequences

of the sublime truth he disclosed, that truth would be neither the less important, nor the less certain.

The great fact itself—the fact which it was his object and his office to teach, and in which he could not be mistaken, was, that the blessings produced by the obedience of Christ shall be as extensive as the evils occasioned by the offence of Adam—that all who suffer from the one shall partake of the benefits of the other, while these benefits themselves shall infinitely exceed and overbalance the calamities entailed upon mankind by the first transgression. The conclusion is inevitable, that the whole human race, without exception, shall ultimately be restored to virtue and happiness. By one passage of scripture, then, at least, the doctrine which it is the object of this work to establish is positively and expressly affirmed, and this is decisive.

But this passage is of great importance in another view. It may be justly considered as confirming, in no inconsiderable degree, the interpretation which has been suggested of the passage in Ephesians and Colossians; for in this passage it cannot be doubted, that, while it is the object of the apostle's reasoning to show that all mankind, whether Jews or Gentiles, are alike participators of the divine favor, and included in the gospel dispensation, it likewise follows, from his argument, that it is equally the intention of the benevolent Author of this dispensation, to bestow immortality upon the whole human race, and to advance them to a state of pure and perfect virtue and happiness.

I omit 1 Timothy, iv. 10; ii. 3, 4; 1 John, ii. 2; Philippians, ii. 9–11; Hebrews, ii. 8; which were formerly adduced as proofs, that all mankind will ultimately be placed in a state of virtue and happiness.

All these passages, indeed, seem perfectly to harmonize with this opinion, but some of them now I think too obscure to be alleged in proof of any controverted doctrine; and all of them, it is probable, relate to a different subject than that of the future condition of mankind.

There is, however, another passage, which still appears to me expressly to the point, and decisive of it, namely, 1 Corinthians, xv. 21-29: "For since by man came death, by man also cometh the resurrection of the dead. For as through Adam all die, so likewise through Christ all will be made alive. But every one in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterwards those that are Christ's at his appearance. Then will be the end, when Christ shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power: for he must reign till he have put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy shall be destroyed, even death. For 'he hath subjected all things under his feet.' But when it is said, 'All things are subjected,' it is manifest that he is excepted who subjected all things to him. And when all things shall be subjected to him, then the Son himself also will be subjected to him who subjected all things to him, that God may be all among all."

Although it may be difficult to ascertain the exact meaning of certain parts of this passage, yet it appears to me to contain a clear and positive annunciation of the sublime and glorious truth, that the consummation of the divine dispensations will be the extinction of death, and sin; and misery, and the universal and eternal prevalence of immortality, virtue, and happi-

ness. "For since by man came death, by man also cometh the resurrection of the dead. For as through Adam all die, so likewise through Christ all will be made alive." "It is evident," as Mr. Belsham observes,* "that the apostle here assumes, as the foundation of his analogy, the account of the fall of man, as recorded in the book of Genesis, and argues upon it as literally true, that, according to his account, all the posterity of Adam, the whole human race without exception, were victims to mortality, in consequence of the fall of their first parents in Paradise—that, according to the same account, as all were sufferers through him, so all shall be raised to life, and restored to that state of dignity and happiness from which Adam unhappily fell—that thus Christ shall amply repair the ruins of the fall, and the second Adam completely efface the dishonor and misery entailed by the first."

Mr. Belsham, in his excellent commentary on this passage, further remarks,* that "it is very plain, that the resurrection of which the apostle treats in this celebrated chapter is the resurrection, not of a chosen few, of a select number, whether greater or less, but that of the whole human race. The apostle's language is so clear and full, with respect to the final happiness of those who are thus raised, and that their resurrection to life will be ultimately a blessing, that the generality of Christians have supposed that he is here treating of the resurrection of the virtuous only. But this is not the fact. He evidently speaks of the restoration of the whole human race—All who die by Adam shall be raised by Christ—otherwise the apostle's assertion

* See Belsham on the Epistles of Paul, in loc.

would be untrue. The case, then, would have been this: As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall a select number, a small proportion, be made alive. But this is not the apostle's doctrine. His expressions are equally universal in each clause. ALL die in Adam. The same ALL, without any exception, without any restriction, shall by Christ be restored to life, and ultimately to holiness and everlasting happiness. And, to guard against the abuse of this doctrine, he proceeds to declare, that all will not be admitted at the same time to the participation of final happiness; for, though all men will be restored to life, and raised to happiness, all will not be made happy at once, but each will be advanced as he becomes qualified for his reward, till in the end the enemies of Christ shall all be subdued, and his authority shall be universally acknowledged and obeyed—but every one in his proper class, not all at once. There will be a gradation in the introduction to final blessedness, depending upon the character of those who are to partake of it, 'Christ, the first-fruits.' He is already raised to life, and his virtues, his labors, and his sufferings, have received their reward. He is the glorious first-fruits, the specimen and the pledge of the final and universal harvest. 'Afterwards, they who are Christ's at his coming.' The true disciples and community of Jesus, all the upright and virtuous in every age and country, will next be raised to life and happiness, and this joyful event will take place at that long-expected period, when Jesus shall appear again in his own and in his Father's glory, invested with the high commission to raise the dead and to judge the world, when the dead in Christ shall rise first, and, being acknowledged by him as his

friends and followers, shall be transformed into the likeness of his glorious person, and shall enter with him into the joy of their Lord."

From the remaining part of this passage, although it may not be possible to ascertain with certainty and precision what is meant by the kingdom with which Christ is entrusted, and which he shall ultimately deliver up to the Father, nor in what sense he shall become subject to him who subjected all things to him—yet we may safely deduce the following conclusions: that, after the resurrection of the just, Christ will be invested by the Father with authority and power to accomplish some great purpose with regard to mankind—that that purpose can be nothing but the completion of the wise and benevolent design of the divine government, in the total abolition of the calamities introduced by the fall—that the accomplishment of this gracious purpose alone constitutes the end, the grand consummation of all things, and that, though this consummation will be opposed by numerous and potent enemies, yet that Christ will exert the power with which he is invested, until he has utterly subdued them, when, having completed the end for which authority was delegated to him, he will willingly resign it into the hand of the Gracious Parent, the Universal Sovereign, from whom he received it, who shall then become forever all things to all his creatures.

This appears to be the clear and express doctrine of the passage, and if it be so it is decisive. The ultimate and universal prevalence of immortality, virtue, and happiness, is thus plainly disclosed, and asserted with all the energy and dignity worthy of the exalted theme. It is thus evident, that the power with which Christ is

invested is not given him in vain, but will be completely effectual—that his triumph will be perfect—that there is no rule, no authority, no power which is opposed to him, which he will not utterly abolish, no enemy which he will not put under his feet. But the enemies with which he is at war, the enemies which it was the labor of his life, the object of his death, and the end of his present exaltation, to exterminate, are sin and misery, and death, the consequence of sin. And over these we are assured by this passage that he will completely triumph. The consequence is certain. The conclusion is inevitable. Immortality, holiness, and happiness, must in the end universally prevail. How else is it possible that these declarations can be accomplished? How can Christ put down all the rule, all the authority which is opposed to him, if a malignant and omnipotent spirit (called the devil) succeed in making the great majority of mankind his victims, and through the ages of eternity exercise an uncontrolled dominion over them? How can Christ *subdue all things unto himself*, if this malevolent being and his agents eternally counteract and oppose him? How can God be all in all, if the greater number of his creatures incessantly execrate his name, and vent the most horrid blasphemies against him? How can death, the last enemy with which he conflicts, be destroyed, if it succeed in blotting out of existence for ever millions of millions of human beings? The only idea it is possible to annex to the destruction of death is the prevalence of life; but, if (to repeat what has already been said) death effect the total and eternal extinction of the conscious existence of the great majority of man-

kind, it is not vanquished—it is the victor; it is not destroyed—it triumphs.

There appears to be no reason whatever for restricting the application of this passage solely to the righteous, as, with a view of avoiding the force of the preceding observations, some have contended, because the context does not require this limitation—because the expressions which the apostle employs are of too universal a signification to admit of it, and because it is difficult to conceive that any thing but the wish to support a system could have suggested the idea, or indicated the necessity of it.

Such is the scriptural evidence in favor of the ultimate and universal prevalence of holiness and happiness. All the passages which have been cited appear necessarily to imply the truth of this opinion; to some of them it seems impossible to affix any other meaning. There is not a single passage in the Old or New Testament which does not perfectly harmonize with this doctrine; but several of the most striking, impressive, and cheering assurances of scripture are totally incompatible with the opinions which oppose it. With the highest and noblest conceptions we can form of the nature and dispensations of the Deity, with the nature of man and the nature of punishment—in a word, with all that natural and revealed religion teach concerning God, concerning his human offspring, and concerning a future state, it perfectly accords. With this body of evidence in its favor, and with no real counter-evidence of any kind to oppose it, it may surely be considered as established.

If any one should fear that its inculcation may lessen

the dread of future punishment, and thus operate to the disadvantage of piety and virtue, the apprehension must originate in a misconception of the doctrine, or an ignorance of human nature. To teach men that they will be visited with a just degree of punishment for the sins they commit—that every deviation from rectitude, even the slightest and the most secret, that every improper feeling and thought which is cherished, *must* bring with it a proportionate degree of suffering—must *inevitably* do so, unless the constitution of the mind and the whole frame of nature be changed—that those who indulge in the least degree in vice must necessarily, in all situations and at all seasons, be the worse for it, and that, if they continue in a vicious course to the end of life, both the nature of the case and the repeated and solemn declarations of scripture assure us that the pain they will be made to suffer in a future world will be most severe and lasting—to suppose that such doctrine will encourage sin, is to imagine that men can be enamored of misery, and that, to excite them to any particular course of conduct, it is only necessary to convince them that it will terminate in their ruin.

If men cannot be restrained from vice by the apprehension of a reasonable and just degree of punishment, it is vain to hope to deter them by menaces, which they are satisfied are both unreasonable and impossible. To suppose that they will encourage themselves in sin, from a persuasion that the misery which they must inevitably bring upon themselves in consequence of it, will terminate in their reformation, is to imagine that they are insane as well as vicious, and to betray the baseness of our own hearts, by showing that we form

a worse opinion of mankind than the worst of men deserve.

Indeed, it is hardly conceivable that the reasonable and just, the solemn and impressive sanctions which the Christian religion gives to the Christian law, would be attended with no greater moral benefit than it is to be feared they are, were they always scripturally enforced. It requires, however, but little acquaintance with human nature to know, that, in order to render the fear of punishment availing in the hour of temptation, it is absolutely necessary to satisfy the mind both of its equity and certainty. The passions of the heart never were, and never can be counteracted, either by actual injustice or by unreasonable menaces; and to teach that an eternity of suffering will be the consequence of the slightest offence, is to open the floodgates of sin, to deprive the mind of the most powerful motives to struggle against its improper inclinations, and even to stimulate it to the pursuit of the unhallowed objects of its desire, by forcing it to suspect the weakness, if not to doubt the reality, of the checks by which it is attempted to restrain it. Were there, therefore, no other argument against the doctrines of Endless Misery and of Total Destruction, than that afforded by their tendency to lessen the sanctions of morality, by destroying the fear of punishment, this alone would be sufficient to justify a distrust of their truth.

The effects of the unamiable doctrine of Endless Misery, and of its kindred opinions, on the temper and conduct, have been strikingly depicted by an able advocate of the doctrine of destruction. "According to men's sentiments of God, and of the designs and measures of his government," observes Mr. Bourn, in his

Discourse on the Gospel Doctrine of Future Punishment, "such hath been the influence of religion on their temper and conduct. And, if they have not framed to themselves a God after their own evil hearts, they have framed their own hearts agreeable to that false and evil character which they were taught to ascribe to God. And when they have believed the Deity to love and hate, to elect and reprobate, nations, parties, or individuals, without reason or regard to the ends of good government, they themselves have become more arbitrary, bigoted, fierce, unmerciful, and more addicted to hate and persecute their fellow-creatures, all who were not of their own church, and whom they supposed to be reprobated of God.

"It is hardly credible, that inhumanity and cruelty would ever have been carried to such excess in the Christian world as they actually have been, had they not derived countenance and support from these anti-christian and barbarous notions. Tyrants and persecutors, if they have not invented these doctrines, yet have applied them to excuse to their own consciences, and to vindicate to others, the most iniquitous and cruel proceedings; and, when they have made the very worst use of their power, in persecuting good men—at least men who deserved no such punishment—they have persuaded themselves and others, that they were acting like the Deity, espousing his cause, and maintaining his character and his glory.

"The court of *inquisition*, as established in many countries, and as far as it differs from civil courts of judicature, is declared by the authors and maintainers of it to be the nearest imitation of the divine tribunal, and it is avowedly founded upon and justified by the

doctrines of reprobation and of eternal torments. Jews, infidels, and heretics, are judged in that court to be criminals, and are condemned. And how do they vindicate this procedure, but by supposing them to be all reprobated and abhorred of God? And they execute them, not by a quick dispatch, but by the most lingering torments. And what do they plead for this cruelty, but that it is an act of faith—that they are doing the work of God, and that he will expose those wretches to the like torments for ever? Thus they conquer nature by faith, as they express it; that is, they extinguish all sense of justice and relings of mercy in their own nature, and harden themselves in iniquity and barbarity, by the belief of those very doctrines we are exposing, and by them they defend themselves in the face of the world, and give a color and sanction of religion to the most enormous wickedness.”

The doctrine, on the other hand, which it is the object of the preceding pages to establish, discloses a principle which is more benevolent in its tendency, and which, were it properly felt, and invariably regarded in the affairs of life, would have a happier effect on society than any other opinion which has ever engaged the attention of men. It leads to a distinction which is but beginning to be observed, even by the intelligent and enlightened, and which, when it shall come to be general, will alter astonishingly the moral condition of the world. It leads to an exact discrimination between the criminal and the crime. While it inspires us with abhorrence of the offence, it softens the heart with compassion for the unhappy condition of the offender, induces us to do every thing in our

power to change it, to give him better views and better feelings. When we hear of the perpetration of a crime, we are too apt to think only of punishment. What suffering can be too great for such a wretch? is the exclamation which bursts from almost every lip. The sentiment is worthy of the unlovely doctrines which produce and cherish it. A more benevolent system would excite a different feeling. What can be done to reclaim the unhappy offender? What means can be taken to enlighten his mind and meliorate his heart? What discipline is best adapted to his mental and moral disorder? What will lead him back to virtue and to happiness most speedily, and with least pain? Such is the feeling of the mind enlightened by the generous doctrine we have endeavored to establish. Could it but enter the heart of every legislator—did it but guide the hand that constructs the cell of the poor captive—did it apportion his pallet of straw and his scanty meal—did it determine the completeness and the duration of his exclusion from the light of day and the pure breeze of heaven—did it apply his manacles, (if, disdaining to treat a human being with more indignity than is practised towards the most savage brutes, it did not dash his chains to the earth,) what a different aspect would these miserable mansions soon assume! What different inhabitants would they contain! Prisons would not then be the hotbeds of vice, in which the youthful offender grows into the hardened criminal, and the want of shame succeeds the abolition of principle, but hospitals of the mind, in which its moral disorder is removed by the application of effectual remedies.

The person who habitually contemplates all man-

kind as children of one common Father, and appointed to one common destiny, cannot be a persecutor or a bigot. He may see much error which he may lament, and much misconduct which he may pity; but a generous affection towards the whole human race will dilate his heart. To the utmost of his ability, he will enlighten the ignorant, correct the erring, sustain the weak, bear with the prejudiced, and reclaim the vicious. Firm to his own principles, he will not trench on the liberty of others. He will not harshly censure, nor suspect an evil motive where integrity and conscience obviously direct the conduct. Mildness will be on his lips, forbearance will mark his actions, and universal charity will connect him with the wise and good of all climes, and of all religions.

He who believes that a Being of almighty power, unerring wisdom, and unbounded love, is seated at the helm of affairs, and is making every event promote, in its appointed measure, the highest happiness of all intelligent creatures, must possess perpetual serenity and peace. The storm of adversity may gather above him and burst upon his head, but he is prepared against it, and it cannot dismay him. He knows that the evils which encompass him are only blessings in disguise. The fair face of nature smiles upon him with a brighter radiance. The boundless expanse of heaven above him, the painted plain beneath him, the glorious sun which diffuses light and life over the ample and beautiful creation, are magnificent gifts of his Father, on which his enlightened eye beholds engraven the promise of his higher destiny. The narrow precincts of the tomb can neither bound nor obstruct his enlarged view. It extends beyond the circle of the earth, and reaches to

that celestial world, where progression in excellence is infinite, and happiness is unchanging and immortal. Nothing can disturb his steady confidence. In the most awful moment of his earthly existence, his feeling is sublime as his destiny is glorious. Even while he is partially subdued by death, and dragged to the confines of the tomb—while he is sinking into it, and it closes over him, he can exclaim in triumph, “O, death, where is thy sting? O, grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth me the victory through Jesus Christ, my Lord!”

Such are the effects of an enlightened and scriptural view of the perfections and government of God, and the nature and destiny of man. Indeed, a firm persuasion, that our Creator is possessed of every possible excellence, that he is our constant and best Friend, that we are entirely at his merciful disposal, that he is conducting us, and all our brethren of mankind, by the wisest means, to the highest happiness, and that the natural and moral disorders which afflict us are the instrument by which he will eventually establish the universal and eternal reign of purity and bliss, cannot but tend to expand the heart, to cherish the benevolent affections, to soften the manners, and unite the whole human race in the tenderest bands of friendship and affection. Were it right to judge of the general effect which the frequent and serious contemplation of these sublime and cheering truths would have on the mind, by the feeling of which he who has made this humble attempt to illustrate and establish them has been conscious while engaged in the pleasing task, with sincerity he might say, that it would be highly favorable to benevolence and to happiness. A more ardent love of

the Supreme Being, a purer and warmer attachment to his fellow-creatures, a more anxious desire to promote the attainment of genuine excellence, both in himself and others, has glowed in his heart while meditating on these delightful subjects. Uniformly has he seemed to himself to rise from the contemplation more deeply affected than before with the emotions of piety and benevolence. May the perusal of these pages produce the same happy effect on the mind of the reader. May it inspire him with a fervent love of God. May it cherish in his bosom an ardent and generous attachment to the whole family of mankind. May it enable him to enjoy with more reasonable, pure, and social satisfaction, the blessings of existence, and to sustain in a manner worthy of a man and a Christian, the affliction which may await him. May it continually cheer him with the most glorious hopes, and fit him to realize them. And may the anticipation of the universal and everlasting reign of Purity and Happiness hasten his own attainment of both!

THE END.

APPENDIX.

To the reader who may be desirous of investigating further the subject discussed in the preceding pages, it may perhaps be useful to be acquainted with the names of the works which at different times have appeared upon it. I have therefore drawn out a list of the chief of those with which I am at present acquainted, to which I at first intended to have added some citations from the works of the more early Christian writers, in order to show that "this opinion is not strange and unusual, nor counted so absurd a tenet by the pious and learned of elder times, as it is by the generality of persons in the present day imagined to be;" but this could not have been done without a considerable enlargement of the volume, which has already swelled to a bulk much beyond what was originally contemplated.

In the early writings on this subject, as well as in some modern publications, there is much which appears to me to be false and inconclusive, both in the principles upon which the doctrine of restoration is founded, and in the passages of scripture which are cited to prove it; but in all of them there is much that is solid and excellent; and I believe I may venture to affirm, that there is not one contained in the present list, from the perusal of which, the intelligent and pious will not derive both pleasure and improvement.

Origen is celebrated for having maintained and prop-

agated the opinion, that the punishment of the wicked will be limited and corrective, and that they will be ultimately restored to purity and happiness. Clemens Alexandrinus, the master of Origen, Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory Nyssenus, Sulpicius, Serverus, Domitianus, Bishop of Ancyra, and Facundus, appear to have entertained the same opinion.

In modern times, the works which have appeared on this subject are numerous. There is an ingenious piece written upon it in French, by a nobleman and minister of the court of the King of Prussia, entitled, *Entretiens sur la Restitution Universelle de la Creation* ; or *Conferences upon the Universal Restitution of the Creation*, betwixt Dositheus and Theophilus.

In "the second volume of *The Phoenix*, or a Revival of Scarce and Valuable Pieces no where to be found but in the Closets of the Curious," a work published in London, in 1708, is an extraordinary paper on this subject. It is "supposed to have been written by one Mr. Richardson," and was first printed in 1658. It is remarkable for its scripture criticisms, which would be read with much interest in the present day. The Piece is entitled, "Of the Torments of Hell ; the Foundation and Pillars thereof discovered, searched, shaken, and removed. With infallible Proofs, that there is not to be a Punishment after this Life, for any to endure, that shall never end."

In the first volume of *The Phoenix* is "A Letter of Resolution concerning Origen and the chief of his Opinions," in which there are many strong and extremely well-written passages in favor of this opinion. This letter, first printed in 1661, was written by Bishop Rust, a learned prelate of the church of Ireland, the intimate friend of Bishop Jeremy Taylor.

Dr. Henry More, in his *Divine Dialogues*, printed in the year 1668, speaks very favorably of this opinion.

Dr. Tillotson, Archbishop of Canterbury, seems to incline to this opinion, though he speaks on the subject with much doubt. See his fourth volume of Sermons, p. 164.

Le Clerc, in his *Bibliothèque Choisie*, (1705,) p. 292, has explained the views of Tillotson, and more directly advocated the opinion of a universal restoration. He also mentions Mr. Camphuyse, a person famous in Holland, as having "publicly declared that he he had been tempted to reject the Christian religion altogether, whilst he believed that it taught the eternity of torments, and that he never overcame those temptations till he found that the threats of the gospel might be taken in another sense." See also Le Clerc's *Parrhasiana*, (1701,) i., 313.

The Restoration of All Things ; or a vindication of the Grace and Goodness of God to be manifested at last in the Recovery of his whole Creation, out of their Fall. By Jeremy White. London, 1712.

This treatise was first published a few years after the decease of the learned writer, who had been chaplain to the Protector Cromwell. The anonymous editor, in his preface, sustains his author's opinion by several authorities, and proposes by the publication as "an acceptable service, to represent God in his most amiable excellencies, and vindicate the supereminence of his love, which is his nature, and the full latitude of his mercy and goodness towards his creatures, which has had a cloud or vail of darkness drawn over it in the minds of the generality of mankind."

A Treatise concerning the State of departed Souls before, and at, and after, the Resurrection. Written originally in *Latin*, by the late Rev. Dr. Thomas Burnet, 1733. See the conclusion of his 10th chapter.

Dr. Newton, Bishop of Bristol, in one of the Disserta-

tions in his Works, will be found an able and ardent advocate of this opinion.

The World Unmasked ; or, the Philosopher the greatest Cheat. In Twenty-four Dialogues, between Crito, a Philosopher, Philo, a Lawyer, and Erastus, a Merchant. To which is added, the State of Souls separated from their Bodies. Being an Epistolatory Treatise, wherein is proved, by a variety of Arguments, deduced from Holy Scripture, that the Punishments of the Wicked will not be Eternal, and all Objections against it solved. Translated from the French. London, 1736.

In the "Letters by several eminent Persons deceased," (1773,) ii., 157, are some remarks by Mr. W. Duncombe, on a letter from Rev. Samuel Say, in which the former contends against the doctrine of endless torments, or "vindictive justice in the Deity," that "all punishment in the hands of an infinitely wise and good Being must be medicinal, or what we call chastisement."

An Essay on the Scheme and Conduct, Procedure and Extent, of Man's Redemption, wherein is shown, from the Holy Scriptures, that this great Work is to be accomplished by a gradual Restoration of Man and Nature to their primitive State. By W. Worthington, A.M. London, 1748. Second edition.

The Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion unfolded in a Geometrical Order. By the Chevalier Ramsay. 2 volumes, quarto. Vol. i., book vi., prop. lviii. London, 1751.

An Extract from Chevalier Ramsay's Explanations of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, on the General Principles of Grace. By John Atkins, author of Universal Redemption. Canterbury, 1794.

Universal Restitution, a Scripture Doctrine. This proved in several Letters, wrote on the Nature and Extent of Christ's Kingdom. Wherein the Scripture Pas-

sages, falsely alleged in proof of the Eternity of Hell Torments, are truly translated and explained. By Mr. Stonehouse, Rector of Islington. London, 1761.

The Mystery hid from Ages and Generations, made manifest by the Gospel Revelation ; or, the Salvation of All Men, the grand Thing aimed at in the Scheme of God, as opened in the New Testament Writings, and entrusted with Jesus Christ to bring into effect. By Charles Chauncy, D.D., of Boston, in New England. London, 1784. Also, by the same Author, The Benevolence of the Deity considered. Boston, 1784.

An Humble Attempt to investigate and defend the Scripture Doctrine concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. To which is added, Observations concerning the Mediation of Jesus Christ, in the various Dispensations of God the Father, and the final Issue of his Administration. By James Purves. Edinburgh, 1784. Second edition.

Thoughts on the Divine Goodness, relating to the Government of Moral Agents, particularly displayed in Future Rewards and Punishment. Translated from the French of O. F. Petitpierre.

Observations on Man, his Frame, his Duty, and his Expectations. In two parts. By David Hartley, M.A. Johnson, London, 1791.

Natural and Revealed Religion explaining each other. In Two Essays. The first showing what Religion is Essential to Man. The second, the State of Souls after Death as discovered by Revelation. Harleian Miscellany. Quarto, vol. vi., p. 39, octavo, vol. ii., p. 94. London, 1795.

The Universal Restoration exhibited in a Series of Dialogues between a Minister and his friend. Wherein the most formidable Objections are stated, and fully answered. By Elhanan Winchester. Fourth edition. Revised

and Corrected, with Notes, Critical and Explanatory. By W. Vidler. London, 1799.

A Letter to the Rev. C. E. De Coetlogon, A.M., Editor of President Edwards' lately-revived Sermon on the Eternity of Hell Torments. By the Author of Dialogues on the Universal Restoration. London, 1789.

The Everlasting Gospel, commanded to be preached by Jesus Christ, Judge of the Living and the Dead, unto all Creatures, Mark, xvi. 15, concerning the Eternal Redemption found out by him, whereby Devil, Sin, Hell and Death, shall at last be abolished, and the whole Creation restored to its primitive Purity; being a Testimony against the present Antichristian World. Written originally in German by Paul Siegvolek. Translated and first printed in the English Language in Pennsylvania, in the year 1753. London, Reprinted for the Editor, Elhanan Winchester, 1792.


Conversations on the Divine Government, showing that every thing is from God, and for good to all. By Theophilus Lindsey, M.A. Johnson, London, 1802.

Letters to Mr. Fuller on the Universal Restoration, with a Statement of the Facts attending that Controversy, and some Strictures on Scrutator's Review. By W. Vidler, London, 1803.

An Essay on the Duration of a Future State of Punishment and Rewards. By John Simpson. London, 1803.

Eternity of Hell Torments Indefensible—an Essay on Future Punishment. By R. Wright. Eaton, London. Second edition.

Theological Disquisitions. 2 vols. By T. Cogan, M.D. Vol. ii., p. 367. Cadell and Davies.

 The following are the prominent American works treating on the doctrine of UNIVERSAL SALVATION.

EXPOSITION AND DEFENCE OF UNIVERSALISM ; by Rev. J. D. Williamson. A very able work, giving a clear and forcible exposition of the views held by Universalists. Price 50 cts.

SERMONS FOR THE PEOPLE ; by Rev. J. D. Williamson. This volume contains fourteen Discourses on important subjects, and is one of great value. Price 50 cts.

ARGUMENT FOR CHRISTIANITY ; by Rev. J. D. Williamson. This volume presents, in a small space, the leading arguments in favor of the Christian religion as viewed by a Universalist. Price 50 cts.

ELY AND THOMAS' DISCUSSION. This is a discussion of the important question of Universal Salvation and Endless Misery ; in a series of letters between Rev. Abel C. Thomas, (Universalist,) and Rev. Ezra Styles Ely, D.D., (Presbyterian.) An unusually interesting volume. Price 50 cts.

DISCUSSION ON UNIVERSAL SALVATION ; between Rev. T. J. Sawyer, D.D., (Universalist,) and Rev. Isaac Wescott, (Baptist.) Price 50 cts.

PLAIN GUIDE TO UNIVERSALISM ; by Rev. T. Whittemore \$1 00

UNIVERSALIST BOOK OF REFERENCE 1 00

BALFOUR'S FIRST AND SECOND INQUIRIES, EACH 1 00

BALLOU ON ATONEMENT 50

BALLOU'S SELECT SERMONS 75

“ LECTURE SERMONS 75

“ NOTES ON THE PARABLES 50

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE PARABLES ; by T. Whittemore 75

ORIGIN AND HISTORY OF ENDLESS PUNISHMENT ; by Rev. T. B. Thayer	\$0 75
ENDLESS MISERY EXAMINED ; by Rev. J. D. Williamson	50
COMPOUND OF DIVINITY ; by Rev. S. Cobb	1 00

The Publishers of this volume have also for sale all the works of Rev. Dr. Chapin, embracing the following:

MORAL ASPECTS OF CITY LIFE.	75
TRUE MANLINESS	75
DISCOURSES ON LORD'S PRAYER.	63
HUMANITY IN THE CITY	1 00
DISCOURSES ON THE BEATITUDES	50
DUTIES OF YOUNG MEN	50
DUTIES OF YOUNG WOMEN	50
CROWN OF THORNS	38
HOURS OF COMMUNION.	38
CHAPIN'S DISCOURSES	50

The above books will be sent by mail, post paid, on receipt of the prices annexed.

NOTE.—We conclude this volume by appending the following *Letter on Endless Punishment*, written by that very distinguished Baptist clergyman, Rev. John Foster, of England.

ENDLESS PUNISHMENT.

FOSTER'S LETTER.

DEAR SIR,—If you could have been apprised how much less research I have made into what has been written on the subject of your letter than you appear to have done, you would have had little expectation of assistance in deciding your judgment. I have perhaps been too content to let an opinion or impression admitted in early life, dispense with protracted inquiry and various reading. The general, not very far short of universal, judgment of divines in affirmation of the doctrine of eternal punishment must be acknowledged a weighty consideration. It is a very fair question, Is it likely that so many thousands of able, learned, benevolent, and pious men should all have been in error? And the language of Scripture is formidably strong: so strong that it must be an argument of extreme cogency that would authorize a limited interpretation.

Nevertheless, I acknowledge myself *not* convinced of the orthodox doctrine. If asked *why* not?—I should have little to say in the way of criticism, of implications found or sought in what may be called incidental

expressions of Scripture, or of the passages dubiously cited in favor of final, universal restitution. It is the moral argument, as it may be named, that presses irresistibly on my mind—that which comes in the stupendous idea of eternity.

It appears to me that the teachers and believers of the orthodox doctrine hardly ever make an earnest, strenuous effort to form a conception of eternity; or rather a conception somewhat of the nature of a faint incipient, approximation.—Because it is confessedly beyond the compass of thought it is suffered to go without an attempt at thinking of it. They utter the term in the easy currency of language; have a vague and transitory idea of something obscurely vast, and do not labor to place and detain the mind in intense protracted contemplation, seeking all expedients for expanding and aggravating the awful import of such a word. Though every mode of illustration is feeble and impotent, one would surely think there would be an insuppressible impulse to send forth the thoughts to the utmost possible reach into the immensity—when it is an immensity into which our own most essential interests are infinitely extended. Truly it *is* very strange that even religious minds can keep so quietly aloof from the amazing, the overwhelming contemplation of what they have the destiny and the near prospect of entering upon.

Expedients of illustration of what eternity is *not*, supply the best attainable means of assisting remotely toward a glimmering apprehension of what it *is*. All that is within human capacity is to imagine the vastest

measures of *time*, and to look to the termination of these as only touching the mere commencement of eternity.

For example, it has been suggested to imagine the number of particles, atoms, contained in this globe, and suppose them one by one annihilated, each in a thousand years, till all were gone; but just as well say a million, or a million of millions of years or ages, it is all the same as against infinite duration.

Extend the thought of such process to our whole mundane system, and finally to the whole material universe: it is still the same. Or, imagine a series of numerical figures, in close order, extended to a line of such a length that it would encircle the globe, like the equator—or that would run along with the earth's orbit round the sun—or with the outermost planet, Uranus—or that it would draw a circle of which the radius should be from the earth or sun to Sirius—or that should encompass the entire material universe, which, as being material, cannot be infinite. The most stupendous of these measures of *time* would have an end; and would, when completed, be still *nothing to eternity*.

Now think of an infliction of misery protracted through such a period, and at the end of it being only *commencing*—not one smallest step nearer a conclusion:—the case just the same if that sum of figures were multiplied by itself. And then think of *man*—his nature, his situation, the circumstances of his brief sojourn and trial on earth. Far be it from us to make light of the demerit of sin, and to remonstrate with the

supreme Judge against a severe chastisement, of whatever moral nature we may regard the infliction to be. But still, what is man?—He comes into the world with a nature fatally corrupt, and powerfully tending to actual evil. He comes among a crowd of temptations adapted to his innate evil propensities.—He grows up (incomparably the greater proportion of the race) in great ignorance; his judgment weak, and under numberless beguilements into error; while his passions and appetites are strong; his conscience unequally matched against their power—in the majority of men, but feebly and rudely constituted. The influence of whatever good instructions he may receive is counteracted by a combination of opposite influences almost constantly acting on him. He is essentially and inevitably unapt to be powerfully acted on by what is invisible and future. In addition to all which, there is the intervention and activity of the great tempter and destroyer. In short, his condition is such that there is no hope of him, but from a direct, special operation on him of what we denominate grace. *Is it not so? are we not convinced—is it not the plain doctrine of Scripture—is there not irresistible evidence from a view of the actual condition of the human world—that no man can become good, in the christian sense, can become fit for a holy and happy place hereafter, but by this operation *ab extra*. But this is arbitrary and discriminative on the part of the sovereign Agent, and independent of the will of man. And how awfully evident is it, that this indispensable operation takes*

place only on a comparatively small proportion of the collective race.

Now this creature, thus constituted and circumstanced, passes a few fleeting years on earth, a short sinful course; in which he does often what, notwithstanding his ignorance and ill-disciplined judgment and conscience, he knows to be wrong, and neglects what he knows to be his duty; and consequently, for a greater or less measure of guilt, widely different in different offenders, deserves punishment. But endless punishment! hopeless misery, through a duration to which the enormous terms above imagined, will be absolutely nothing! I acknowledge my inability (I would say it reverently) to admit this belief, together with a belief in the divine goodness—the belief that “God is love,” that his tender mercies are over all his works. Goodness, benevolence, charity, as ascribed in supreme perfection to him, cannot mean a quality foreign to all human conceptions of goodness; it must be something analogous in principle to what himself has defined and required as goodness in his moral creatures, that in adoring the divine goodness, we may not be worshipping an “unknown God.” But if so, how would all our ideas be confounded, while contemplating him bringing, of his own sovereign will, a race of creatures into existence, in such a condition that they certainly will and must—*must*, by their nature and circumstances, go wrong, and be miserable, unless prevented by especial grace—which is the privilege of only a small proportion of them, and at the same time fixing on their delinquency a doom of which

it is infinitely beyond the highest arch-angel's faculty to apprehend a thousandth part of the horror.

It must be in deep humility that we venture to apply to the measures of the divine government, the rules indispensable to the equity of human administration. Yet we may advert to the principle in human legislation, that the man tempted to crime should, as far as is possible without actual experience, be apprised of the nature and measure of the penal consequences. It should be something the main force of which can be placed in intelligible *opposition*, so to speak, to the temptation. If it be something totally out of the scope of his faculties to apprehend, to realize to his mind, that *threatened something is unknown*, has not its appropriate fitness to deter him. There is, or may be, in it what would be of mighty force to deter him if *he could have a competent notion of it*; but his necessary ignorance precludes from him that salutary force. Is he not thus taken at a fearful disadvantage? As a motive to deter him the threatened penalty can only be in proportion to his (in the present case) narrow faculty of apprehending it; but as an evil to be suffered it surpasses in magnitude every intellect but the Omniscient. Might we not imagine the reflection of one of the condemned delinquents suffering on, and still interminably on, through a thousand or a million of ages, to be expressed in some such manner as this:—Oh! if it had been possible for me to conceive but the most diminutive part of the weight and horror of this doom, every temptation to sin would have been enough

to strike me dead with terror; I should have shrunk from it with the most violent recoil.

A common argument has been that sin is an *infinite evil*, that is, of infinite demerit, as an offence against an infinite Being; and that since a finite creature cannot suffer infinitely *in measure*, he must *in duration*. But surely, in all reason, the limited, and in the present instance *diminutive nature of the criminal* must be an essential part of the case for judgment. Every act must, for one of its proportions, be measured by the nature and condition of the agent. And it would seem that one principle in that rule of proportion should be, that the offending agent should be capable of being aware of the magnitude (the *amount*, if we might use such a word) of the offence he commits, by being capable of something like an adequate conception of the being against whom it is committed. A perverse child committing an offence against a great monarch, of whose dignity it *had some*, but a vastly inadequate, apprehension, would not be punished in the same manner as an offender of high endowments and responsibility, and fully aware of the dignity of the personage offended. The one would be sharply chastised; the other might as justly be condemned to death. In the present case, the offender does or may know that the Being offended against is of awful majesty; and therefore the offence is one of great aggravation, and he will justly be punished with great severity; but, by his extremely contracted and feeble faculties, as the lowest in the scale of strictly rational and accountable creatures in the whole creation, he is infinitely incapable

of any adequate conception of the greatness of the Being offended against. He is, then, according to the argument, obnoxious to a punishment not in any proportion to his own nature, but alone to that infinity of the supreme nature, which is to him infinitely uncomprehensible and unknown.

If an evil act of a human being may be of infinite demerit, why may not a good one be of infinite excellence or merit as having also a reference to the infinite Being? Is it not plain that every act of a finite nature must have, in all senses, the finite quality of that nature—cannot, therefore, be of infinite demerit?

Can we—I would say with reverence—can we realize it as possible that a lost soul, after countless millions of ages, and in prospect of an interminable succession of such enormous periods, can be made to have the conviction, absolute and perfect, that all this is a just, an equitable infliction, and from a Power as *good* as he is just, for a few short sinful years on earth—years and sins presumed to be retained most vividly in memory, and everlastingly growing clearer, vaster and more terrible to retrospective view in their magnitude of infinite evil—every stupendous period of duration, by which they have actually been left at a distance, seeming to bring them, in contrariety to all laws of memory, nearer and ever nearer to view, by the continually aggravated experience of their consequences?

Yes, those twenty, forty, seventy years, growing up to infinity of horror in the review, in proportion to the distance which the condemned spirit recedes from them—all eternity not sufficing to reveal fully what

those years contained!—millions of ages for each single evil thought or word!

But it is usually alleged that there will be an endless *continuance* of sinning, with probably an endless aggravation, and *therefore* the punishment must be endless. Is not this like an admission of disproportion between the punishment and the *original cause* of its infliction? But suppose the case to be so—that is to say, that the punishment is not a retribution *simply* for the guilt of the momentary existence on earth, but a continued punishment of the continued, ever-aggravated guilt in the eternal state; the allegation is of no avail in vindication of the doctrine; because the first consignment to the dreadful state *necessitates a continuance of the criminality*; the doctrine teaching that it is of the essence, and is an awful aggravation, of the original consignment, that it dooms the condemned to maintain the criminal spirit unchanged forever. The doom to *sin* as well as to suffer, and according to the argument, to sin in *order* to suffer, is inflicted as the punishment of the sin committed in the mortal state. Virtually, therefore, the eternal punishment is punishment of the sins of time.

Under the light (or the darkness) of this doctrine, how inconceivably mysterious and awful is the aspect of the whole economy of this human world! The immensely greater number of the race hitherto, through all ages and regions, passing a short life under no illuminating, transforming influence of their Creator; ninety-nine in a hundred of them perhaps have never even received any authenticated message from heaven;

passing off the world in a state unfit for a spiritual, heavenly, and happy kingdom elsewhere; and all destined to everlasting misery. The thoughtful spirit has a question silently suggested to it of far more emphatic import than that of him who exclaimed, "Hast thou made all men *in vain!*"

Even the dispensation of redemption by the Mediator, the only light that shines through this dark economy—how profoundly mysterious in its slow progress, as yet, in its uncorrupted purity, and saving efficacy. What proportion of the earth's inhabitants are, at this hour, the subjects of its vital agency? It was not the divine volition that the success should be greater—that a greater number should be saved by it—or most certainly, most necessarily, its efficacy *would* have been greater. But in thus withholding from so large a proportion of mankind even the knowledge, and from so vast a majority in the nominally christian nations the divine application, indispensable to the efficacy of the christian dispensation, could it be that the divine purpose was to consign so many of his creatures, existing under such fearful circumstances, to the doom of eternal misery? Does the belief consist with any conception we can form of infinite goodness combined with infinite power?

But, after all this, we have to meet the grave question, *What say the Scriptures?* There is a force in their expression at which we well may tremble. On *no* allowable interpretation do they signify less than a very protracted duration and formidable severity. But I hope it is not presumption to take advantage of the

fact, that the terms everlasting, eternal, forever, original or translated, are often employed in the Bible, as well as other writings, under great and various limitations of import; and are thus withdrawn from the predicament of *necessarily and absolutely* meaning a strictly endless duration. The limitation is often, indeed, plainly marked by the nature of the subject. In other instances the words are used with a figurative indefiniteness, which leaves the limitation to be made by some general rule of reason and proportion. They are designed to magnify, to aggravate, rather than to define. My resource in the present case, then, is simply this—that since the terms do not necessarily and absolutely signify an interminable duration—and since there is in the present instance to be pleaded, for admitting a limited interpretation, a reason in the moral estimate of things, of stupendous, of infinite urgency, involving our conceptions of the divine goodness and equity, and leaving those conceptions overwhelmed in darkness and horror if it be rejected, I therefore conclude that a limited interpretation is authorized. Perhaps there is some pertinence in the suggestion which I recollect to have seen in some old and nearly unknown book in favor of universal restitution; that the great difference of *degrees* of future punishment, so plainly stated in Scripture, affords an argument against its perpetuity: since, if the demerit be infinite, there can be no place for a scale of degrees, apportioning a minor infliction to some offenders; every one should be punished up to the utmost that his nature can sustain; and the same reason of equity there may be for a limited

measure, there may consistently be for a limited duration. The assignment of an unlimited duration would seem an abandonment of the *principle* of the discriminating rule observed in the adjustment of degrees.

If it be asked, *how could* the doctrine have been more plainly and positively asserted than it is in the Scripture language? In answer, I ask, how do *we* construct our words and sentences to express it in an absolute manner, so as to leave no *possibility* of understanding the language in a different, equivocal, or questionable sense? And may we not think that if so transcendently dreadful a doctrine had been meant to be stamped as in burning characters on our faith, there would have been such forms of proposition, of circumlocution, if necessary, as would have rendered all doubt or question a mere palpable absurdity?

Some intelligent and devout inquirers, unable to admit the terrific doctrine, and yet pressed by the strength of the Scripture *language*, have had recourse to a *literal* interpretation of the threatened destruction, the eternal death, as signifying *annihilation of existence*, after a more or less protracted penal infliction. Even this would be a prodigious relief; but it is an admission that the terms in question *do* mean something final, in an absolute sense. I have not directed much thought to this point; the grand object of interest being a negation of the perpetuity of misery. I have not been anxious for any satisfaction beyond *that*; though certainly one would wish to indulge the hope, founded on the divine attribute of infinite benevolence, that there will be a period somewhere in the endless futurity,

when all God's sinning creatures will be restored by him to rectitude and happiness.

It often surprises me that the fearful doctrine sits, if I may so express it, so easy on the minds of the religious and benevolent believers of it. Surrounded immediately by the multitudes of fellow-mortals, and looking abroad on the present, and back on the past state of the race, and regarding them, as to the immense majority, as subjects of so direful destination, how *can* they have any calm enjoyment of life, how can they be cordially cheerful, how can they escape the incessant haunting of dismal ideas, darkening the economy in which their lot is cast? I remember suggesting to one of them such an image as this:—suppose the case that so many of the great surrounding population as he could not, even in a judgment of charity, believe to be christians, that is, to be in a safe state for hereafter—suppose the case to be that he knew so many were all doomed to suffer, by penal infliction, a death by torture, in the most protracted agony, with what feelings would he look on the populous city, the swarming country, or even a crowded, mixed congregation? But what an infinitesimal trifle that would be in comparison with what he does believe in looking on these multitudes. How, then, can they bear the sight of the living world around them?

As to religious teachers; if the tremendous doctrine be true, surely it ought to be almost continually proclaimed as with the blast of a trumpet, inculcated and reiterated, with ardent passion, in every possible form of terrible illustration; no remission of the alarm to

thoughtless spirits. What ! believe them in such inconceivably dreadful peril, and not multiply and aggravate the terrors to frighten them out of their stupor ; deploring that all the horrifying representations in the power of thought and language to make, are immeasurably below the real urgency of the subject ; and almost wishing that some appalling phenomenon of sight or sound might break in to make the impression that no words can make. If we saw a fellow-mortal stepping heedlessly or daringly on the utmost verge of some dreadful precipice or gulf, a human spectator would raise and *continue* a shout, a scream, to prevent him. How then can it comport with the duty of preachers to satisfy themselves with brief, occasional references to this awful topic, when the most prolonged thundering alarm is but as the note of an infant, a bird, or an insect, in proportion to the horrible urgency of the case ?

There has been, in some quarters, what appears to me a miserably fallacious way of talking, which affects to dissuade from dwelling on such terrifying representations. They have said, These terrors tend only to harden the mind ; approach the thoughtless beings rather, and almost exclusively, with the milder suasives, the gentle language of love. I cannot, of course, *mean* to say, that this also is not to be one of the expedients and of frequent application. But I do say, that to make this the main resource is not in consistency with the spirit of the Bible, in which the larger proportion of what is said of sinners and addressed to them, *is plainly in a tone of menace and alarm*. Strange if it

had been otherwise, when a righteous Governor was speaking to a depraved, rebellious race. Also it is matter of fact and experience, that it is very far oftener by impressions on fear that men are actually awakened to flee from the wrath to come. Let any one recall what he has known of such awakenings. Dr. Watts, all mild and amiable as he was, and delighted to dwell on the congenial topics, says deliberately, that of all the persons to whom his ministry had been efficacious, *only one* had received the first effectual impressions from the gentle and attractive aspects of religion; all the rest from the awful and alarming ones—the appeals to fear. And this is all but universally the manner of the divine process of conversion.

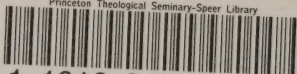
A number (not large, but of great piety and intelligence) of ministers within my acquaintance, several now dead, have been disbelievers of the doctrine in question; at the same time not feeling themselves imperatively called upon to make a public disavowal; content with employing in their ministrations strong general terms in denouncing the doom of impenitent sinners. For one thing, a consideration of the unreasonable imputations and unmeasured suspicions apt to be cast on any publicly declared partial defection from rigid orthodoxy, has made them think they should better consult their usefulness by not giving a prominence to this dissentient point; while yet they make no concealment of it in private communications, and in answer to serious inquiries. When, besides, they have considered how strangely defective and feeble is the efficacy, to alarm and deter careless, irreligious

minds, of the terrible doctrine itself notionally admitted by them, they have thought themselves the less required to propound one that so greatly qualifies the blackness of the prospect. They could not be unaware of the grievous truth of what is so strongly insisted on as an argument by the defenders of the tenet—that thoughtless and wicked men would be sure to seize on the mitigated doctrine to encourage themselves in their impenitence. But this is only the same perverse and fatal use that they make of the doctrine of grace and mercy through Jesus Christ. If they *will* so abuse the truth we cannot help it. But methinks even this fact tells against the doctrine in question. If the very nature of man, as created, every individual, by the sovereign Power, be in such desperate disorder, that there is no possibility of conversion and salvation except in the instances where that power interposes with a special and redeeming efficacy, how can we conceive that the main proportion of the race thus morally impotent (that is really and absolutely impotent) will be eternally punished for the inevitable result of this moral impotence? But this I have said before.

With all good wishes for the success of your studies and ministrations, I am, dear sir, yours truly,

JOHN FOSTER.

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library



1 1012 01019 4001

